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of Debates
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**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 22 April 2010

Jeudi 22 avril 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 April 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 avril 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CREATING THE FOUNDATION
FOR JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 POSANT LES FONDATIONS
DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA CROISSANCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 19, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 16, An Act to implement 2010 Budget measures and to enact or amend various Acts / Projet de loi 16, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2010 et édictant ou modifiant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 21, 2010, I am now required to put the question.

On April 14, Mr. Phillips moved second reading of Bill 16, An Act to implement 2010 Budget measures and to enact or amend various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after question period today.

Second reading vote deferred.

ENERGY CONSUMER
PROTECTION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES CONSOMMATEURS D'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 13, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 235, An Act to enact the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts / Projet de loi 235, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et modifiant d'autres lois.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'll just pick up where I left off when I started my lead last week. Although I think that

some of the measures in the first half of this bill that deal with energy retailers are useful—too limited, in my opinion, but useful—the second part of this bill, which deals with sub-metering and smart meters for multi-unit residential, is a profoundly problematic piece of legislation and, I think, is a move backward in terms of what has to happen in this province.

That change will substantially reduce the financial incentives for landlords to invest in energy efficiency in their multi-unit buildings. It will become an impediment, a barrier, to actually dealing with environmental and energy issues. That's a substantial problem.

Secondly, because it sets up the framework for moving the cost of energy in apartment units to tenants, it means that those who in the future will be responsible for energy costs will be the people who don't have the legal right to actually modify the building that they live in, nor will they have the financial resources to make the changes that are necessary.

Lastly, it will make life much more difficult for tenants. Over 30% of Ontario's tenants now live at or below the poverty line. They are not in a situation where they can take substantial increases in their cost of living. They are in a situation where this government should be protecting their interests and making sure that their lives and their housing are affordable. Those are the main arguments.

Let's split the bill into two pieces. The first piece deals with energy retailers. When the minister introduced the bill, he said that he was dealing with 100 to 150 complaints per week about energy marketers, energy retailers. He talked about the pressure that's applied to customers, to the general public. I for one have no difficulty in agreeing with the minister on that. Absolutely, that is the case. I have constituents coming in to me, talking about how they have been pressed hard at the door to hand over their bill so that a retailer, a salesperson, can get the account number. Once they have that account number, the games can begin.

People in their 70s and 80s; new Canadians whose grasp of English may be limited; people who have come to me who have had kids running around, pressed for time, with an energy retailer at the door pushing them hard to turn over a bill—people who are, because of distraction or age or lack of language ability, vulnerable to high-pressure sales techniques—are the people who are getting hit by these companies.

Others have been hit historically by the automatic renewal. A business quite close to my constituency office came to see me a few years ago because that business's

bookkeeper had gotten a notice from the company saying, "Your contract is about to expire;" and then further down in the letter, "If you don't get in touch with us, the contract will automatically be renewed for five years." The bookkeeper made a mistake. He wasn't used to contracts that renewed themselves in that fashion. He threw the letter out. The local business person was re-signed up against his will and was paying dramatically more for the gas in his office than I was paying in my constituency office.

These are companies that make their money by skimming off the top of people in this province. These are companies that make it very difficult to get out and charge people a lot of money to get out of these contracts, yet, as I will touch on later, make sure that their interests are well protected in their arrangements with consumers.

The core of this retail marketing of gas and electricity doesn't make sense for this province. It simply imposes a layer of bureaucracy on the energy consumers of this province that doesn't make their lives better, doesn't make energy more affordable and, in the end, undermines the well-being of our economy. There is no advantage to people paying for these contracts.

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We don't have the numbers before us today on the profits that are made by these retailers of electricity and gas, but it's hard for me to imagine that it's not a very lucrative business. I can tell you, from talking anecdotally to a former salesperson who was going door to door selling these contracts, that he made \$100 for each person he signed up. So if you're out there now watching the Legislature and you've signed one of these contracts, right off the top you have to pay \$100 that goes to that salesperson. That doesn't help you. It doesn't help you with your energy bill.

I was in London, Ontario, about a month ago and passed the office of Summitt Energy. They had a sign out front saying, "Jobs on offer. Make \$52,000 per year." I look at the numbers: at \$100 a contract, 10 contracts a week is \$1,000. That's two contracts a day for a five-day work week; I'm sure it's doable. There are people out there making \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year selling these contracts. But in the end, do they provide any value to this society? Do they actually increase our wealth? No. What they do is skim off this society. That's what is going on. It doesn't build the common wealth of this province.

When the minister first made his comments, he said that thousands of people are employed in these retailing operations, and he's right; there's no doubt about it. But I have to say that thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands could be employed putting in place energy-efficiency measures for homes, apartment buildings and commercial buildings. In fact, a study that was done a year ago showed that a million construction workers would be needed to retrofit houses right across Canada. It would generate a million person-years of employment. There, you actually create something that is worthwhile

for society. You're not just buying and selling. Buying and selling is a good thing, but you're not doing it solely as a way of extracting money from the population.

The minister's argument would have been just as strong in the United States or here in Canada when we were dealing with the private health insurance industry. Before medicare came in, before we had single-payer insurance, we had large competing bureaucracies selling health insurance. One could say, "Why shut down those large competing bureaucracies? People are employed." In the end, you make a decision to have a one-payer system so that you aren't wasting money. That's what we're doing here now. We are taking the labour of many thousands of people and using it unproductively, instead of actually reducing energy consumption the way we need to.

I have to say that I can see some value for people who want to pay a premium to ensure there is an investment made in green power. I might argue for a change in the business model, but I wouldn't block someone from actually making that contribution to society so that we accelerate the technological change, the transformation we have to go through. I can see that exception. But after that, this retailing of gas and electricity by these energy marketers is a waste of our society's wealth and time. However, getting rid of that practice is not what is on the table. What is on the table is a series of measures meant to further protect consumers from an irrational system. It's meant to protect people from excess.

As I said in my opening remarks, there is no doubt: I've talked to seniors who have been pushed very hard at their doors by salespeople who will not take no for an answer. As you probably have, Speaker—in fact, since you've been here a number of years, I have no doubt that you've done this—I have gone door to door through my riding, talked to a wide variety of people and encountered many people who are vulnerable, who are living in their homes, who are in a situation where their ability to fully grasp what is going on around them is more limited than it used to be and who are vulnerable to high-pressure salespeople who come to their doors.

I referred to a salesperson that I talked to earlier who made \$100 each time he sold one of these retail contracts. Well, the other thing that person had to say to me was that he learned very quickly that if he spent half an hour explaining to people how these contracts worked, no one would buy. They would just say, "No, thanks. Now I understand. You're asking me to pay this big premium so that I won't have a volatile energy price some time in the future. I'm willing to pay a lower price now and take my chances later." He said, "Don't do that. Don't spend half an hour talking to people. They won't buy. Just get them to sign."

I've talked to my constituents who have asked those people at the door, "Who are you? Are you?"—in this case—"from Toronto Hydro?" In Hamilton, "Are you from the local utility?" And they say, "No, we're the people who provide the power to the utilities." From the testimony we got in committee, these retailers buy their

electricity from generators, and that is the source of the power they're paying for in the system. They don't supply the power to the local utilities. That is not true.

In the course of clause-by-clause debate, I moved that we stop this door-to-door sales process. I have to say that, in practical terms, this would mean these companies could market on the Internet, they could do tele-marketing, they could set up booths at shopping malls—all kinds of things like that. But their ability to get at the vulnerable and to get at their utility bills, take them and take down the numbers would be eliminated.

The failure to pass that amendment is a substantial problem, because I believe that the bulk of this business relies on high-pressure sales to the vulnerable and to those who are at a disadvantage. And if these companies continue to sell door to door, even with what is put in place, you can expect that we will continue to get an on-going litany of complaints about abuses.

In this case, strangely enough, I hope I'm wrong. I hope it's successful. I hope I have misread it. The reality is that if these safeguards are effective, most of these companies will not be able to function, because they live on high-pressure sales. If the government is wrong and these companies continue their high-pressure tactics, we'll be back here debating this again, because the people of this province don't want to have to deal with con artists.

I use the phrase "con artists" because people do get conned. My guess is that there are people out there who are selling this who are straightforward. But there are a lot of con artists, and that means that they get done in. They will be looking for a way around whatever rule has been put forward, and that will cause substantial problems for all of us.

I want to just read this into the record from an official notice—a media release—of the Ontario Energy Board, April 1, 2010: "OEB Imposes Conditions on Renewal of Universal Energy Gas Marketer Licence." You should know that Universal Energy, now owned by Just Energy, is a company whose marketing practices were such that the Ontario Energy Board wouldn't give them a five-year renewal of their licence; it gave them a two-year renewal of their licence. There were a lot of complaints about their operations—justified complaints, apparently. So you out there who are watching this debate should remember the name Universal Energy/Just Energy. This company is one that has been put on watch by the Ontario Energy Board.

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In the course of the hearings about these companies, we had a presentation by Councillor Maurice McMillan, ward 2, from the city of Orillia. He had Orillia Power do an analysis of the cost to consumers of being on the RPP, regulated power plan; the power provided by Orillia Power, the local utility; and the power that was purchased through one of these retailers. I'm not going to go through all the lines, but the bottom line is that it cost substantially more—\$75 more—for those on the retail marketing company's system. They got stuck with a higher

power bill. That's the reality. For those of you who have a retailer at the door, remember this: You will be paying more. You will take a hit. This is something that is going on in this province, is not curbed in the way that it needs to be curbed and, frankly, is a problem that I think will come back to this Legislature.

All that said, generally speaking, I'd vote for measures to limit these retailers more. If this bill was only to do with those retailers, I'd vote for it reluctantly but vote for it and press for stronger measures.

The more problematic part of the bill has to do with sub-metering in apartment buildings. Most of the protections that are supposed to be in this bill are dependent on the regulations. Those haven't been drafted, so it's very difficult for those who want to criticize the bill to actually fully know what's on the table, what will be there to actually protect tenants or not protect tenants. The reality, in my opinion, is that the government should not proceed with sub-metering in multi-residential apartment buildings, and I'll talk to the economic and environmental rationale for that. They should not proceed with smart metering in these multi-unit buildings.

I believe that conservation and demand management programs for landlords and tenants are what's really needed if we're going to deal with energy consumption in multi-unit buildings. Insulation programs; solar heating and hot water programs that are cost-competitive with electricity and gas; and education and social marketing, targeted at landlords and tenants, are the kinds of programs that are needed to actually make a difference.

The current government initiative to expand smart metering into the multi-unit residential sector won't meet the overall energy conservation goals that this province requires. Given that the government seems to be going forward with it—it still has regulations to write—it should be seriously considering a low-income rate assistance program, a publicly funded multi-residential conservation program and placing an onus on the landlords to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for permission to install suite meters, subject to meeting stringent requirements. The burden shouldn't be placed on tenants to apply for rent decreases after the fact.

The larger context that we're dealing with when it comes to electricity prices is that this Liberal government has made substantial mistakes in its decisions around energy policy. As much as it talks about the Green Energy Act, an act that I voted for, the bulk of what it's investing in is nuclear power and gas-fired power. Those are very expensive options. Investment in those options also means increased investment in transmission lines, a very expensive option.

Not just tenants but homeowners are having to deal with higher and higher bills because decisions have been made around electricity investment, hydro investment, that are not the least-cost, environmentally sound options, but in fact very expensive options that are not helpful to the environment.

Under the current system of vacancy decontrol, there's no reason to believe that shifting the burden of costs from

landlords to tenants will result in lower rents, particularly when you have a vacancy. When a unit is vacant, no tenant has to be asked their permission to have a meter put in. You can expect that those meters will be put in each and every time that a unit is vacated. The future tenants will have to deal with the consequences of that.

Tenants could face rent hikes due to landlord applications for above-guideline increases for retrofit work. That will affect the ongoing affordability of rental stock, particularly in large urban centres. Tenants will be forced to pay for electricity service directly, without any control over the factors which could reduce bills, such as the quality of appliances or the building envelope.

I've had the opportunity to be a property manager. I've dealt with buildings that were very old; I've dealt with buildings that were fairly modern. The reality is that two thirds of people's energy costs relate to heating and cooling on the one side—temperature conditioning—and hot water. That's two thirds of the cost. If you are in a building that is inadequately insulated, that is leaky, has a lot of cold air flowing in in the winter or cool air flowing out in the summer, then you are going to have substantial problems with keeping yourself comfortable in that unit. If you are in a high-rise building and you don't have either the legal authority or the money to put in proper double- or triple-glazed windows, if you don't have the money to put in place the insulation that is required—and frankly, you couldn't do it; legally, you don't have the right—then your ability to influence two thirds of your energy bill is not there. You are stuck.

What this bill assumes is that every unit is identical, every unit has the same services, every unit has the same kinds of walls and windows, and it's just simply a question of tenants behaving badly or behaving well. But that is not the reality. Landlords control the factors which have the greatest impact on the actual temperature in units. Landlords decide what kind of appliances—stoves and refrigerators—they put into units. I know in this bill there's mention of setting the energy standard for those appliances. Will it be set at the highest current standard and adjusted as those standards rise? I want to see that, and I want to know if it will be enforced, because there is a huge problem with lack of enforcement.

The way your building is oriented will determine whether you are very hot in the summer, or cool; very cold in the winter, or warmer. I've lived in a high-rise in this city on Broadview Avenue that had a north-south orientation. The units on the west face getting the west sun in midsummer were incredibly hot. In winter, they were the warmer units. Units on both sides of the building had the same single-pane glazing that leaked air around the frames.

Under this legislation, tenants in buildings where there is a substantial temperature difference from one side of the building to the other are all going to get hit with the cost of the energy and will have no ability to correct the fundamental problems, and the landlords will no longer have an incentive to act because the bulk of the energy costs will be out of their hands, will not be a concern for

them. And frankly, if they were to act, they wouldn't be able to reap the savings. So this in fact undermines the incentive for landlords to act and puts us in a situation in these buildings where we are going to have far more problems in the future getting action. These multi-unit buildings in Ontario, many of which were built in the 1960s and 1970s, are what an energy analyst friend of mine called energy pigs. They were built relatively inexpensively. They radiate a lot of heat. They were not built to conserve energy.

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So when Mayor Miller of Toronto came forward with his plan for modernizing apartment buildings around Toronto and did a calculation of the energy savings that it would generate, his numbers were very big. The energy savings would pay for the retrofits. That program will be far less attractive to landlords under this regime.

I want to speak briefly about findings in the United States on these matters. The housing and urban development department in the United States did a study a few years ago looking at the impact of different measures on energy consumption in their buildings. That study found that at core, having the tenants pay for their electricity and heating didn't change the amount of energy consumed in those buildings. So a publicly owned piece of housing stock in one city, where the tenants paid all their energy costs, and a publicly owned building in another city, where the owner paid all the energy costs, had pretty much the same energy consumption.

What they found when they did their analysis was that the big difference was between multiple-unit dwellings and single-family dwellings—a big difference there. Far less energy is consumed in a multi-unit building because you've got buildings that have units around them. If you've got neighbours on either side of you and above and below, you're not going to be radiating energy out. You've got your energy radiating out into other units.

They looked at the age of buildings. The older a building was, the more it leaked energy and the more the energy costs went up.

So if we put in meters for these tenants, those who live in old buildings will get hit hard; those in new buildings, much less hard. But it is not going to solve the fundamental problem, and that's what came up in that study as well: You need to invest in actually making the buildings energy efficient if you want to cut their operating costs, their energy costs. That's the key and that's the centre of it.

The other thing I want to speak to is the reality that this initiative now opens tenants up to having smart meters installed. There are a few things that I want to touch on here. On January 7 in the Toronto Sun, Jonathan Jenkins reported: "Meters Prove Not So Smart," talking about the installation and the operation of smart meters in Toronto by Toronto Hydro. He writes: "They promised smart would be cheap, but so far it's proving more expensive.

"Most Toronto Hydro customers who've been on smart meters and time-of-use pricing the longest have actually seen an increase of up to \$3 per month.

“The cost of the meter itself also adds an extra \$3-\$4 a month to local utility bills.”

That’s important, because there is a mass initiative to move forward on these meters, and frankly, they are not going to give the kinds of savings that the government has trumpeted. I have some other notes that I’ll cite on that. But what it will mean for tenants is they’re going to have more difficulties in making ends meet.

In the course of the clause-by-clause debate, I actually sat down, called Toronto Hydro, looked at the bills of tenants. When you do the calculation—Toronto Hydro says it costs about \$3 to \$4 a month to run a meter. The meters cost \$500 installed. I did a very rough calculation, saying 5% interest over 10 years to amortize the meters, so \$1 to \$2. So it was about 5 bucks a month for that new sub-meter in an apartment building that a tenant will have to pay.

If a tenant isn’t paying for their heating and hot water on their electricity bill, their bill is in the \$30- to \$36-a-month range. Well, \$6 is about 15% of the value of that electricity bill. They would have to save a lot of electricity just to pay for the meter itself—the meter and the monitoring of that meter. In the end, the tenants would get virtually no benefit and, frankly, only one third of the electricity cost in that apartment would be accessible to the tenants’ ability to reduce their costs. They’re imposing this cost on tenants with very little potential that the tenant will actually be able to do anything but pay for the meter.

I’ll go back to smart meters. Jonathan Jenkins reports:

“Toronto Hydro found the actual difference in smart meter bills—up or down—is quite small.

“For 72% who saw their bills rise, the average monthly increase was 90 cents.

“For the roughly 27% who saw decreases, the average was 29 cents per month.”

Why is that? Why is it that people aren’t saving a fortune when they get to do these things, when they get to shift their bills around?

I took an opportunity to print off Toronto Hydro’s graph showing what people pay in what segments of the day. For the winter rates, the peak times, when you pay most, are 7 to 11 in the morning and 5 to 9 at night. I have to say to you, if you get up at 7 in the morning and you have a shower, if you have electric hot water; if you make toast and, if it’s winter, you make some hot cereal, you have a coffee, then it is very difficult for you to avoid having an increased electricity cost. If you, as I do, turn the heat down overnight and you turn it up when you get up in the morning, something that has been recommended for a long time, then you get hit in that peak period. That’s a situation where people’s choices are relatively limited—they want to have a hot breakfast; they want to be warm; they want to have the lights on when they wake up—so they’re going to get hit with that peak period.

Then from 5 to 9: You get home, say, between 5 and 6 in the evening, you have dinner to make and you’ve got kids who come home. Are you going to keep the lights

off in mid-winter when it’s dark? Are you not going to have the radio or television on? Are you not going to cook? The reality is that people are being hit with costs at their peak time of need for electricity. This isn’t a time when everyone is sleeping; this is when they live their lives at home. They don’t actually find themselves in a position where they can cut an awful lot of their activities, which is why, and I’ll go on to this in another study, people don’t save a lot on these meters, because their fundamental demands and needs come up at these peak times. That’s of consequence.

The other peak period is in the summer, and that’s from noon until 5 p.m. I can actually see where people who go to work during the day can turn down their air conditioning and turn it up again when they come home at night. But I have to say to you, Speaker—and others in this House may have had this experience if they’ve dealt with people who are at home with their kids through the day—if you’re at home with two toddlers through the day, you’re not going to have the house cold in the winter and you’re not going to have it really hot in the summer. If you’ve got two or three kids in the house, you’re going to look after them, and you’re going to take a hit on your hydro costs. If you’re a senior and your health requires that you keep your temperature at something that’s comfortable, then you know what? You’re going to be in the house and you’re going to turn on that air conditioner even though you’re paying peak price.

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The term in economists’ language is “elasticity.” People don’t have a lot of options for moving away from those costs. They absorb them, they take a hit, which is why these meters don’t save an awful lot, although the amount of money that we put into them is somewhere in the range—since I’ve heard two ranges, I’ll quote both—of \$600 million to \$1 billion. That’s a lot of money to spend on something where people’s options are fairly limited. For \$600 million to \$1 billion, you can do an awful lot of energy efficiency in this province. You can use that kind of money to lease high-efficiency appliances, to lease solar hot water heaters, to actually finance an awful lot of changes that would cut people’s living costs. But instead we’ve spent \$600 million to \$1 billion on the meters whose impact is relatively small because the options people have at the times when they’re getting hit are so limited.

This Liberal government had a study done by a fairly well-respected company, Navigant. They did a study in—it looks like 2007—on smart meters and the impact of those on residential load. Remember, we are spending \$600 million to \$1 billion, and their calculation was that the reduction in demand would be about 300 megawatts from peak. I have to tell you, for energy efficiency that’s a very expensive investment. That is an extremely expensive investment. For a program that touches every household in this province, that is a very low rate of return. That isn’t what we want to see. And yet tenants will be exposed to that in its full glory, and they will struggle with those bills. And like many members is this House, I

suspect that we all will be dealing with the phone calls and the emails of people who are dealing with energy bills that are problematic.

A report I have here called *Advanced Metering Infrastructure—Implications for Residential Customers in New Jersey*, produced for the New Jersey Department of Public Advocate, is an important study. It's an out-of-Ontario study looking at the impact of smart meters in other jurisdictions. Are they economic? Are they useful? Are they producing savings greater than the cost of generating power? Because really, for most energy efficiency measures, that's cheaper than the combined cost of distribution and generation. So when you do energy efficiency, it's to avoid the cost of generation and new distribution and transmission lines.

Their experience, and this is their review of utilities making filings to regulatory bodies in the United States, is that "The AMI filings"—we use the term smart meters—"of utilities in other states, and the studies prepared by New Jersey EDCs"—electricity distribution companies—"indicate the total cost of AMI, measured as the net present value of revenue requirements over 15 years, would be greater than the NPV of forecast savings in utility operating costs over the same period." Breaking that down, smart meters are more expensive than generation and distribution. That is a very expensive energy efficiency measure—very expensive.

They say that "utilities who invest in AMI"—smart meters—"will eventually file for an increase in the distribution service rates in order to recover that shortfall." In other words, unlike almost all other energy efficiency measures that are popular and have been promoted by utilities around North America, this is one where it's costing more than generation and distribution. This is an expensive option, and yet we've gone into it whole hog and we're about to extend it to tenants who will not be that grateful for this particular tender of mercy visited upon them.

They talk about the experience in the test programs for these smart meters and say that the expected reductions are based on three major assumptions: reduction in peak use for participating customers; percentage of customers who will voluntarily participate; and long-term persistence of the reductions per participating customer. They note that many of the people who took part in the initial trials were given appreciation payments, and thus there is a skewing of the numbers that would come out of that. They say that because these meters have only been in for a few years, it is very difficult to say whether people would actually keep to the changes that were projected.

Their conclusion: "Utility investments in AMI," or smart meters, as we say, "are not the least-cost approach to reducing the annual energy use of residential customers in New Jersey, or the bills and air emissions associated with that annual energy use." Well, do you know what? I think they're right. It seems to be the experience with Toronto Hydro so far. In their recommendation to the regulatory bodies, they say, "Are there alternatives to smart meters?" They say yes: "Other utilities have invest-

ed in load control and supporting infrastructure for only those circuits where such investments are clearly cost-effective."

In this province, all the time we have situations where systems and distribution lines are overloaded. You have a choice: You can run another power line over somebody's property, or you can invest at the end point in reducing demand. There are those in this House who have rights of way on their property, who understand exactly what I'm talking about. It is cheaper for us to look at the system and pick out the areas where strategically we get the best bang for our buck. That isn't what we have here. That is not what is being visited upon the tenants of this province.

In the end, we have before us a bill that advances a strategy that will be very costly to tenants. We have a strategy that will undermine the financial incentive for landlords to invest in energy efficiency in their buildings. We have a setup for higher electricity bills all around, without the advantage to society or individuals that we need to have from every investment we make. We're a rich society, but we're not a society that can afford to throw away \$600 million to \$1 billion on these kinds of investments. I am going to urge people, even though there are some useful things in the first half of this bill, to vote against the bill because of the substantial weaknesses, the retrograde reality of the second half of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: Contrary to my comments before we started, I did pay attention to the member from Toronto—Danforth. I always listen to the member from Toronto—Danforth in his delivery of speeches in this House. I want to thank him for his blunt response to the bill and his participation in the committee.

There are so many things I could go over; let me do it very quickly. The retailers, the suite metering and the deposits and disconnects: There are going to be three ways to cancel contracts: there's the 10-day cooling-off period; there's the third-party verification within 10 and 60 days; and there are 30 days—a full 30 days—after receiving your first bill that you are allowed to cancel the contract. We believe we've found a balance when it comes to retailing at the door. The member believes that we should be banning it altogether. That is not an option that did not get considered. That's a double negative, so let me put it this way: It was considered, and the agencies know that. We think we've found a balance to make sure that that gets cleaned up. If it doesn't, there are other options, and the member is right: we will evaluate that.

What we're also doing is clearly defining the few issues. Deposits and disconnecting: We're defining that when the salesperson is at the door, they immediately must verbally identify themselves and disclose who they are and who they're working for; they need ID badges; they also need training and standards that the industry must provide; and plain language in contracts, in various languages. So we're looking at all of the avenues that we

can correct to make sure that those people at the door are protected as consumers, and all members from all sides of the House agreed that consumer protection was the issue.

Accountability of retailers and the OEB random audits of the retailers: There is going to be even more expectation that they improve.

Regulations in writing: The consultations on the regulation-writing is taking place next year within the year, and we hope we can cover off an awful lot of the issues the member is concerned about.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to commend the member from Danforth. He did his homework and obviously sits on the committee and had a lot of good input.

I must say that there are a lot of good things in the bill, and any kind of bill like this was long overdue. The consumer abuse that was going on out there was a real tragedy. But as my fellow member stated, it doesn't go quite far enough. Some of the things in the bill maybe have a negative impact for people who, like he stated, are staying at home at peak times with kids in the winter and summer, and will be utilizing their equipment during those hours. I don't think it will be beneficial to stay-at-home moms and the elderly. They will be at home all day long a lot of times, and some of them are house-bound. As you get older, some people require a little more heat. The system is not quite what it was and you require a little more warmth. I know that when my grandparents got older, they liked it a little warmer. It was almost like a steam bath when I went in their house sometimes. It was pretty warm. So I can imagine, or I don't want to imagine, what their hydro bill will be like or their utility costs, because I think it'll be—it's not as if our seniors don't have enough to deal with, with their fixed incomes, and I think this will be just an additional burden for them.

I don't think this has been thought out well enough. I think there are certain groups in our society that will benefit from it, and there are many groups that won't. I think that more input from the public and user groups would have been a good thing to do. So I can safely say that we will probably not be supporting it because it doesn't go far enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Toronto-Danforth has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thanks to the members for Brant and Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for listening and for commenting.

I appreciate that, in fact, consideration was given to shutting down the door-to-door sales by these retailers, but I'm sorry that you didn't come to the conclusion that you were going to do it. I think it would have been a very good step.

I want to say to you, Speaker, that this should be a very clear message to the energy retailers that they are

starting to build a political consensus in this province that we are not happy with their operations and that if this comes to the House the next time, there is a very good chance that they will be dispatched, because there is only so much abuse that the public can take. They take a fair amount. It takes a lot to rile them. They have a lot on their minds, but having people come to their doors, aggressively harassing them for their utility bill, and in some cases—and we know it's true because companies have been charged and convicted—actually having signatures forged for contracts.

It's clear that the Ontario Energy Board was not happy with Universal Energy when they gave them a limited renewal, not five years or two years. It's clear that these sorts of practices are hugely problematic both for us as legislators but for the citizens of this province who deserve far better than this. I hope, although I don't believe, that these measures substantially curtail those abuses.

When it comes to tenants, I don't believe that what's in this bill and the direction that's being taken are going to help the environment. That's a huge problem. Beyond that, it will hurt tenants, and for that reason alone we won't be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise and join the debate today on Bill 235, an act respecting energy retailers, An Act to enact the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts.

Since I was first elected in 2007, I have received countless visits and phone calls from my constituents regarding energy retailers. Many of these retailers will be affected by this bill. In fact, my constituency office in Sarnia is often spending hours out of their day assisting the people of Sarnia-Lambton in regard to energy contracts they have signed at their home and at the door.

Recently, I wrote a column that appeared in one of our local weekly periodicals. It was titled, "Do You Know Who's Knocking at Your Door?" In it, I listed a number of issues that are concerns in Sarnia-Lambton. I won't go into them today. Many of the members in this House have heard me speak about them—I won't say ad nauseam but at length from time to time. I won't say what they are. They don't have anything to do with this energy bill.

"But, each week"—I'm quoting myself here—"without fail, my office in Sarnia receives your phone calls, letters and visits in regard to the occasional dodgy business practices and, frankly, unfair contracts which have been signed with door-to-door energy retailers.

"Many of us know these 'energy retailers' as their agents have knocked at our doors and asked to see our energy bills, almost always promising a better deal. I have heard many accounts from constituents who were under the false impressions that these agents arrived at their door representing these local energy utilities, such as Union Gas or Bluewater Power," which was not the case.

"These energy retailers promise 'flat-rate plans' and 'price protection' which will stabilize" my constituents'

“energy rates for a specific period; however, they are not always such a good deal.” In fact, it was often found after the fact when these constituents would present themselves at my office, that they had in fact been “locked into three-or-five year plans at rates which would force them to pay up to twice as much as they would have been charged by the standard local utility! Moreover, what they don’t tell you is that if you to cancel the contract, you could be penalized with a cancellation fee of up to \$1,500 or more.”

Our office worked with a number of these constituents to reverse these contracts and remedy these situations. That’s why I am pleased to rise today after many years of pushing this government to act. The government has finally agreed to introduce a bill which will significantly change how energy retailers do business in this province.

Though this bill is more than two years’ overdue, it would prohibit many of the current unfair practices taking place. It would simplify the wording in energy contracts and set down firm rules regarding your ability to cancel contracts with retailers, and it’s about time.

In fact, I’m confident when I say that I know there’s not a single member of this House who hasn’t had some contact with a consumer who has a horror story to tell about an energy retailer or representative of an energy retailer who has come to their door and, thereafter, constituents have come to their office. In fact, in many cases, they can absolutely prove that there was misrepresentation on the part of that agent, which makes it quite clear that it is about time that something was done about this. Whenever there is an environment in sales where people are going to the door and are clearly misrepresenting themselves by saying things that they have no right to say or promising things that are completely untrue, it must be stopped.

However, at the same time, while I do support the reasons behind bringing forth this legislation to protect consumers, I’m a little concerned about the way it’s being done. In fact, from what I recall, this bill seems awfully similar to a private member’s bill brought forth by the member for—David Ramsay—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Great member.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yeah, a great member—in November 2008. Timiskaming—the member for Timiskaming. I apologize.

So I ask, if this government believes protecting consumers is a good idea today, why wasn’t it a good idea in November 2008? It’s just a thought.

As my caucus colleague our energy critic previously stated, the exposé that was presented on CBC’s Marketplace early in 2009 was obviously a wake-up call for this government and for anybody who didn’t think there were problems going on in the energy retailing business. These problems needed to be addressed, and I believe that Mr. Ramsay’s bill would have partially done that over a year ago, so I think they’re a little late to the game.

My question is, why did the Minister of Energy—at that time, Minister Smitherman—take so long to react

and bring in a piece of obviously good legislation that should have been done a long time ago?

Now, there’s clearly a need for this protection, but there are definitely some issues with this legislation as well. The member for Timiskaming’s bill would have prohibited retailers from entering into contracts with consumers other than those whose names appear on a bill. It would have required the retailer to provide a written copy of the contract and a reaffirmation letter with specific required information, including the price to be paid to the retailer versus the utility. It should also state clearly the terms of the contract and other relevant information.

The bill also made it quite clear that he had reached out not only to us but to members of the third party and to industry representatives like the Ontario Energy Association and discovered many ways to improve the bill. I am worried that in the drafting of this bill the same consultations have not been done. Moreover, I worry about the place that the Ontario Energy Board has been put in with this bill. If you want to ensure that there’s protection—and I support the premise behind the legislation absolutely—why has the Ontario Energy Board been pushed to the back burner? We already have an Ontario Energy Board which could have been given more teeth for enforcement, but instead it seems that this bill largely avoids working with them.

What I can agree with is this: Will the energy consumer be better off at the end of the day when this legislation is passed than before? Absolutely. Absolutely, the energy consumer, the customer at the door, my constituent, your constituent is going to be better off. We’ve been encouraging the government to bring forth such legislation that would do just that, but at the same time, my concerns with the positioning of the Ontario Energy Board and the government’s seeming lack of consultation with the major players involved in this industry still stand. Again I ask, if this government believes that protecting consumers is a good idea today, in April 2010, why wasn’t it a good idea in November 2008?

By the time this bill is implemented, I would ask the members watching today and the audience to ask yourselves how many consumers and constituents of ours would have been protected over the last year and a half if the government had acted in the autumn of 2008 rather than sitting on their hands for over a year.

Thank you again for the opportunity to rise and speak in support of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Duguid has moved third reading of Bill 235. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I didn’t hear the no. I’m sorry.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day?

Hon. Gerry Phillips: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): There being no further business, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1003 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm pleased to give welcome this morning to the United Nations in Canada group and the UNA youth, who are here to promote the Ripple Effect, their water protection and conservation statement, for Earth Day. They are: from Hamilton, Deanne Durward, Jacob Houpt, Kai Fan and Si Chen; from Walkerton, Katie Schaefer and Braden Weltz; from Quinte, Phil Armstrong, Subhi Kurban and Benisha Kaur; along with regional coordinator Barry Randall and UNA Canada staff and volunteers Dagna Pielaszkiwicz, Rehana Tejpar and Georgina Bencsik. Welcome, one and all.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Just to follow up on the previous member, in the members' east gallery today we also have some other individuals with the United Nations Association in Canada. We have Hilary Pearson, who is on the national board of directors, and Georgina Bencsik from the United Nations Association in Canada, Toronto regional branch. We have UNA Canada's Ripple Effect Ontario participants: from Ripple Effect Peterborough, Sam Morrell; from Youth4Water Toronto, Jae Hong Kim, Pia Johnson, Zahrah Munas, Shiré Brandi and Ameera McIntosh. We certainly welcome them today.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: In the east gallery, I'd like to introduce my LA Melanie Wright's family, who are with us here today visiting from Quebec: her mom, Nancy Wright, and her boyfriend, Andrew Sainsbury.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to introduce two friends who are visiting from the great riding of Hamilton East-Stoney Creek: Mary DiBacco and Angela Cansee.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to introduce some very special guests who are with us today: Mike Duncan and Jean Stilwell, the co-hosts of Good Day GTA on my favourite radio station, Classical 96.3. Please welcome them.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On April 23, the people of the Republic of Turkey will be celebrating International Children's Day. Therefore, in the gallery to help us celebrate this as well—and every member will receive an invitation for Sunday to attend a very special International Children's Day event put on by the Turkish federation of Canada—I have the pleasure to introduce to you the new Consul General of the Republic of Turkey, Mr. Mustafa Bilgen; the president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations, Mehmet Bor; the former chief of building, city of Toronto, Yaman Uzumeri; the vice-president of the FCTA, Mr. Ismail Vataner; the president of the Turkish Culture and Folklore Society, Gelal Uçar; the director of the Turkish Federation Com-

munity Foundation of Canada, Yildiz Ünsal; and the president of the ITU Alumni Association of Canada, Ahmet Gökgez. Welcome.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege and honour to introduce two guests who are here today, Maxine and Jim Caron, who are here to observe this fine Legislature and all the carryings-on that go on.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome my friends Ms. Shayesteh Mahdi and Mr. Amir Ghiassi.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I might as well join the gang. I'd like to introduce Roger Sigouin, mayor of Hearst, who's here with a delegation from the community of Hearst.

INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a copy of an order in council appointing Lynn Morrison as Integrity Commissioner commencing April 13, 2010.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Acting Premier. Premier McGuinty gagged a family he allowed to be terrorized in Caledonia from saying how much he paid in hush money. He placed a gag order on Carillion Canada, blocking them from telling the public how the McGuinty Liberals made a mess of the bidding process for redevelopment of service centres. He's put a gag order on mom-and-pop pharmacy operations to block them from telling patients and seniors the alternatives they've offered to save money while avoiding cuts to front-line health care under the Liberals' strong-arm plan. What makes the Premier think he can get away with gagging his opponents?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: It's very difficult to understand, and perhaps in the supplementary we'll know what the direction of the question is. Let me just say that if these are supposed attempts at gagging, they clearly haven't done very well, have they? Because people with the Ontario government—we have an open-door policy to actually talk to our stakeholders on a regular basis. We engage our stakeholders, whether they're business, individuals or associations representing the people of Ontario. We have a long-standing policy. Even with our association of municipalities, we actually created a law to mandate consultation, something that your government refused to do and voted against during our initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Here's the direction of the question: A pattern has developed where Premier McGuinty is caught doing anything he can to avoid accountability. He was caught using the budget bill to cover up his breaking the law by cancelling a public review of the

wasteful local health integration networks. He tried to bury a \$53-million energy tax on electricity bills. He refuses to release details on the deals he made for 40 US clinics and hospitals to be preferred providers of American health care to Ontario patients. He told Ontario families he banned untendered contracts, but then he was caught handing out deals to run the Windsor Energy Centre and Casino Niagara, and for consultants at LHINs. Is this pattern of behaviour a bad habit or is it indicative of something else?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I just want to give a little “that was then, this is now” history. Unlike this member opposite, I was here in this House watching when your party was the government and we had to go digging to find that your Minister of Energy, through an energy agency of the government, took a trip with his family to Euro Disney and hid the expenses. That is the kind of outrage that we, the public, watched in your government. In this government, you can go online and review what it is we’re doing. In this government, the only reason that the public has an opportunity to argue, complain, debate or support is because this government makes the information available publicly. When that legislation came forward, this official opposition—

Interjections.

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

1040

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the Acting Premier, through you, of course, that this is a government that wants to talk about accountability, but then they go around and do something exactly opposite. This is rubbing off on other Liberal cabinet ministers.

The health minister said her contract with McKinsey and Co., the details of which of course are secret, is for \$750,000, but the Sudbury hospital admits you are diverting even more of their budget to pay for this untendered contract. The infrastructure minister and the Minister of Transportation ran the dubious bidding process for renewal of service centres. The labour minister cut his own side deal to send WSIB workers to the US for American health care. His entire caucus is trying to block the re-appointment of the Environmental Commissioner and the Ombudsman.

This government is not in favour of accountability. What makes you think you can get away with pretending that you are?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: There are a few of us that were here back in the day. Your party, which you’re speaking for today, is the same group that sent the then trade minister on a European tour with Bacardi rum and Andy Brandt, and hid the expenses through the LCBO. We’ve changed that rule now in Ontario, and the only reason I’m so surprised you’d ask the question today is that you voted against our law to make that kind of expense public.

It’s very ironic that today we’re faced with questions when we’ve seen legendary openness in government and transparency. All you have to do is move the mouse and

click, and you have access to virtually everything that we’re doing. That’s how you can even find a question every now and then that’s relevant—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I realize it is Thursday and members are anxious to get back to their constituencies, but we collectively within this House have work to do. Part of that is question period, and I’m having extreme difficulty in hearing members either ask questions or answer questions. I’m sure all of our guests that are here today would like to hear them as well.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again, my question is for the Acting Premier. Premier McGuinty was also caught trying to slip through changes to the school curriculum so that, beginning in September, sex education will be taught to six-year-olds in grade 1. Parents are already coming forward and telling us that they weren’t consulted, Catholic school boards are saying they won’t implement the new curriculum, and the only ones who knew you were doing were so-called experts and Toronto advisers.

What made you think you could get away with cutting parents out of a decision about their own kids?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I am very pleased to have an opportunity to correct a record that is so clearly laid out incorrectly today in this House. This process started two years ago. This is important to the Ontario government, which has the best Ministry of Education in the world—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Let me tell you about this process that they claim was so secret. We were talking about 700 students consulted; 70 organizations over two years; 2,400 people gave advice on drafts via the website and through letters. This was the point. We have experts: parents, teachers, principals and community leaders. It’s important to note that we took their advice.

Our Ministry of Education is known as the best in the world. We have the best experts. We have the best institute to train teachers. We have the most visitors from around the world coming to that ministry in our government—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, it’s really interesting: If these consultations were so broad, then why are people so outraged now?

While the Liberals posted these changes to the curriculum in January, you were deliberately quiet in posting them before the rest of the curriculum changes for the fall were ready to be released. Why didn’t you announce these significant changes to parents?

The minister did make announcements about eating standards in schools, welcoming students from Haiti, new

school safety rules, graduation rates and hands-on technology training. If you stand behind your decision to teach sex education to grade 1 kids, then why didn't you announce it?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think we do understand what the Conservatives mean to do, and I think they are back to the politics of division. What we are doing with this government is working with the experts, engaging the right groups, including parents and experts in education, to develop a curriculum that represents Ontario today. There isn't a parent out there who doesn't want their child educated with the latest and most up-to-date and appropriate, including age-appropriate, education. If parents go to our website, they will see exactly the kind of dialogue that teachers would have with those students at the right age, with the right terminology—nothing that this crowd could be afraid of. All I can say is that in the 12 years since the last update, our world has changed. It's our responsibility to make—

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's quite clear that the McGuinty government failed to consult with probably the most important group of experts: parents. Where was the parent consultation? Premier McGuinty gave more prominence to the completion of an administrative review of—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I withdraw.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's time to throw somebody out.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I appreciate the offer from the member from Trinity–Spadina. Do you want to be the first?

I'd just remind the honourable members that it is important that we all have the opportunity to hear a question and hear an answer. Please continue.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The McGuinty government chose to release the changes separately from the rest of the curriculum revisions, and one has to wonder why. Why did you bury the changes from parents? They have a right to know: Was your motive for making no announcement and burying the decision to teach sex education to six-year-olds because you didn't want anyone, including your own caucus, to know about it?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: First of all, we need to correct the record. What is absolutely critical is that parents have been consulted during a two-year process—70 organizations. We have prided ourselves on including parents in every step of the massive changes we've made for the better in education.

Let's go back to our grade 1 students. Does this party honestly think it's inappropriate for young children to learn about what their body parts are, that they are in fact private, to know what we're supposed to be showing and not showing, when you're in grade 1? Are you honestly opposed to the language as is written for the grade 1 curriculum to know the right names of your body parts?

Tell me that you are not in the Dark Ages about what a grade 1 student is coming home with through the Internet or through the schoolyard. We want those children taught properly.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. Ontarians care about the environment. They know that we all have to act today to deal with climate change, air pollution, depletion of resources. Three quarters of Ontarians say they're trying to be more environmentally responsible than a year ago. But making the green choice to retrofit their homes should be affordable. Why won't this government make it possible for all Ontarians to be green?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm not sure where the member is going with this question, but surely we've done more when it comes to providing all ratepayers with opportunities to conserve. Our home energy savings program has helped 160,000 families provide retrofits to their homes to help make their homes more efficient. Over 348,000 energy audits have been done to help those very families make important decisions on their homes, to save on their energy costs and contribute to building an energy culture in this province. We've done more than any government has for conservation.

I will agree with the member on one thing, and that's that we intend to do more, and we will do more.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, three quarters of Ontarians don't think governments are doing enough to address the environment.

It's telling that your government announced its home retrofit program in a million-dollar Rosedale home. People have to have a lot of money to put out the kind of cash that's needed to actually do the retrofits that are required. It's no wonder, then, that only one in 25 homeowners have taken advantage of the home retrofit program. That means that a very small percentage of Ontarians have been able to actually take advantage of that cash. They need a different approach.

Won't your government, today, on Earth Day, announce that it will make home retrofits financially accessible to the vast majority of Ontarians?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm almost thinking that the member opposite, and this surprises me, is suggesting that our home energy programs and our home energy retrofit program are not things that are benefiting homeowners across this province. It appears that he has taken the position that the Conservative federal government has taken to back away from these programs. We are not going to back away from those programs.

Some 160,000 families across this province have benefited from our home retrofit program, 348,000 families have had home audits, and thousands of individuals

have had opportunities to find employment in what is a budding new sector in this province. This program has been successful, along with a number of the other programs that we're engaged in.

We remain fully committed to conservation; we are today, and we will be in the future.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: If Stephen Harper is the base of comparison, then we're putting a pretty low standard here.

There are a lot of ways to make retrofits accessible to most Ontarians. Manitoba provides low-interest loans for home retrofits that people can pay back through their home utility bills. BC has a green landlords program that will retrofit all apartment units in 20 years. There are affordable options that work for modest-income households.

Why won't you take the steps necessary to ensure that all Ontarians can afford to go green?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, this program has been one of the more successful programs that we have, but let me just talk about some of the other programs that are out there that are making a difference.

We have our Power Pledge program. We have smart meters that we're bringing in, and I know the member would support that. We have the Great Refrigerator Roundup. We have the Peaksaver program. We have the aboriginal retrofit program, hot and cool savings, Every Kilowatt Counts, banning inefficient light bulbs. The list goes on and on. We are doing more in the conservation area than any government before us.

When it comes to assisting low- and middle-income people, in the recent budget the Minister of Finance announced a \$455-million tax credit. That will be going into the pockets of low- and middle-income Ontarians as they try to adjust to increasing energy rates.

We care about those individuals. We're going to work with them and everybody else in this province to ensure—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Ontarians understand that investing in transit and the environment is not just the right thing to do to protect our planet, but it creates jobs, reduces health care costs and improves our quality of life. Every dollar invested in public transit returns up to \$9 in jobs, economic activity and reduced pollution and health care costs.

Can the Minister of Transportation say what the impact of slashing \$4 billion from Transit City and \$170 million from the bus replacement program in this year's budget will be on future health care costs, lost jobs and lost economic activity?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's extremely important that we understand that this is not about cutting funding for transit; this is about stretching the money that we have committed over a longer period of time. The debate that's going on right now, fuelled by the third party here in the city of Toronto, is absolutely beside the point.

What we have said is that we are committed to building the Transit City projects, the Metrolinx projects, in Toronto. We are committed to light rail transit. We are committed to making sure that there's an integrated regional network of transit in the GTHA. That's our commitment, and we are going to continue to work on the projects even though the member opposite is part of a party that wants to create the notion that we are not continuing. That's just not the case.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The whole question is: when? Three hundred frustrated people packed city hall yesterday. They shared personal stories about the way these transit cuts are affecting them now and into the future, and criticized the McGuinty government's short-sighted and backward plan to slash the funding and to delay it for many years. Why is the province telling people who live far from subways, who take overcrowded buses, who sit in gridlock, to wait longer to get home to their families? Why the delay?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we're telling those people is that we understand that they need public transit in Toronto and in the GTHA. What we are telling those people is that we're going to continue with these projects, that we're going to continue building and that we have had to stretch the projects out over a slightly longer period of time.

One of the proponents of transit in the city of Toronto, Adam Giambrone, has said, "If you've got a cash flow problem, we're happy to talk. We're happy to stretch out some of these projects. This isn't just a hard line in the sand. This is about being reasonable." You can see that Adam Giambrone and, I hope, the mayor are starting to understand that a plan is coming. We are developing a plan with Metrolinx. We need them to work with us because we understand exactly that those jobs and those methods of transportation for people who live in the city are absolutely critical. That's why we're going to continue.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Back to the minister: If Toronto is going to be a world-class city, and it wants to be, it needs to have a world-class transit system. This morning the mayor will be signing a pledge to build Transit City by 2020. I am going down to sign that, as are other New Democrat MPPs. Will the Minister of Transportation sign it as well?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's what I think is happening: I think the member opposite and the mayor understand that we are absolutely committed to bringing forward a plan. I think they understand that we understand how important this is and that we are going to be

continuing with the projects. The kind of debate that's going on here is about when and how we are going to do it, so that they can claim when we bring the plan forward that they pushed us to do it. The reality is that we're on track. We're developing a plan with Metrolinx. We're going to be continuing with these projects, and there's money going into projects in the city of Toronto right now—today. We're going to continue, and I am very pleased that Adam Giambrone and the mayor seem to be understanding that they need to work with us so we can get that plan going.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. If members want to have cross-chamber conversations, please take them outside or to your respective offices.

New question.

PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Our leader, Tim Hudak, proposed a plan and legislation to bring greater transparency and accountability to all parts of government. We're calling for freedom of information to be extended to all public bodies, and for all hospitality expenses, contracts over \$10,000 and position reclassifications to be posted. There are over 600 public bodies, but the Premier is only making 22 of them be reviewed by the Integrity Commissioner's office. I ask the minister: Do you see any reason why the expenses of all other public bodies should be treated differently than these 22 agencies?

1100

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Our government has moved very aggressively to create more responsible organization within our agencies, boards and commissions. We have changed the legislation to a very large extent so that all these organizations become more accountable.

I have not seen the proposals that the Conservative Party is putting forward. I will be more than pleased to look at them.

Let me say that I think we have proposed several initiatives before, and their party actually voted against each and every one of them. For example, we opened up the publicly funded universities—they were brought under the freedom-of-information act. Their party voted against that—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: We didn't hear much there. One agency that gets a special free pass on their expenses being reviewed is Dalton McGuinty's local health integration networks. The Integrity Commissioner's office, as well as the LHIN headquarters, confirmed that no one is reviewing the expenses of LHIN boards, staff or consultants. Yet, strangely, Premier McGuinty said the Integrity Commissioner reviews LHIN expenses, which is why he was not listening to our call for a public review or adopting our accountability measures.

The Premier and Minister Takhar have not explained why Dalton McGuinty said the Integrity Commissioner's office reviews LHIN expenses when they don't. What makes you think you can get away with this?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, I really don't understand where their party stands on these issues. When we brought the legislation forward to post these expenses online, their party opposed it.

Also, let me just quote from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

Hon. Harinder Takhar: Let me just quote, in Hansard from September 16, the member from Durham. When we proposed this posting of expenses, this is what he said: "We know that there could be as many as 80,000 employees filing expenses. It could amount to a million or more expense documents to be audited. The Integrity Commissioner's office has eight employees today under their charge." So he was basically saying that we shouldn't be doing it because of the expenses. Now you are advocating that we should be doing it because of them.

My view is that we need to have accountability, but we also need to make sure that there is a balance between accountability—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. We have with us today a number of First Nations members from the Rama First Nation and their tribal council. They're here again for one simple reason: The crown, in 1764, said that First Nations would be exempt from paying certain taxes. Your government has negotiated with the federal government an HST that's going to be implemented on July 1. My question to you is simply this: Why did you not ensure to exempt them in the first place when you negotiated this HST with the federal government?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I welcome the question from the member. I do want to welcome the many people from First Nations who are visiting us today at Queen's Park. In particular, Grand Chief Patrick Madahbee is here. We welcome you and we're delighted that you're here, both inside and outside of the Legislature.

I say to the member that it is important to remember that for some 30 years now, all the parties in this House have had the privilege of having government, and we have always provided, since I think about 1980, a point-of-sale exemption in regard to the provincial sales tax.

On July 1, there will be no provincial sales tax. There will be just one harmonized sales tax in Ontario, administered by the federal government. We have reached an agreement with them that under the administrative rules of the federal government—and what they do right across the country—when a First Nations person is on-reserve, there is no sales tax. When they're off-reserve—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The buck stops with you, Minister. It is your HST; it's not the federal government's HST. It is you who has implemented this policy, and it was up to you, as a government, to ensure that the point-of-sale exemption was in place when you negotiated it.

So I ask you again: Why don't you take your responsibility and ensure that, by July 1, there will be a point-of-sale exemption? It's Dalton McGuinty's HST.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Despite the bluster, let's get to the facts. On July 1, there is no provincial sales tax; there is but one harmonized sales tax, administered solely by the federal government.

We have said to the federal government that we believe that the administrative practice in the province of Ontario that sees the point-of-sale exemption should be maintained in the province.

First Nations are rightly frustrated, as is our government, as should all members be frustrated by the fact that the federal government refuses to sit down at the table where we have been working with First Nations. The administrator of the tax has to agree, and to date they have not. That is why we are calling and we should all call on the federal government to—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakubuski: When the Speaker is standing, you're supposed to sit down.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And when the Speaker is standing, you're not supposed to be talking.

New question.

PESTICIDES

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. As you know, today is Earth Day, and it marks the one-year anniversary of Ontario's ban on the use and sale of cosmetic pesticides. The ban protects Ontarians from unnecessary use of cosmetic pesticides on our lawns and gardens and is one of the toughest in the world. We're seeing other jurisdictions such as New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and BC following our lead.

With the warm weather approaching and people starting to get outside tending their gardens, many had traditionally used products such as weed and feed on their lawns. Now, with the pesticide ban in place for a year, people are looking for the best ways to adjust their practices to maintain beautiful lawns.

Minister, how can people find out more information about what products they can and can't use and how to maintain a healthy, pesticide-free lawn?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all congratulate the member on her great advocacy on this action and a number of other actions that this government has taken. Let me also say that the people of Ontario are proud of the toughest ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides in all of North America. I know that the official opposition

belittles that effort, but the people of Ontario are totally behind us in this regard.

Yes, we have banned about 250 pesticide products from sale. That includes about 80 pesticide ingredients that are banned for cosmetic use. Of course, the real reason why we're doing this is to make sure that we are protecting the health and welfare of all Ontarians, particularly the younger children who may have been affected by previous pesticide use.

You can have a healthy and beautiful lawn and garden without the unnecessary risks posed to our health—

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

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Ontarians want information on environmentally friendly products. They want it for their lawns and they're looking for green alternatives. Thank you for that information. They're also looking for new eco-friendly products like low-risk and biopesticide alternatives so that they can do their part for the environment.

Through actions such as the pesticide ban, we not only protect our environment and the health of our families, but we also spur economic growth, research, innovation and new environmental solutions.

Minister, what is being done to help ensure that there are new environmentally friendly lawn-care options available and that the research and development is being done right here at home in Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Gerretsen: First of all, I encourage everyone to go to ontario.ca/pesticides if they're looking for information and tips on how to green their lawns without the use of pesticides. And yes, we have seen Ontario businesses take the ball and run with it. Manufacturers are investing in innovation and developing pesticide-free technologies and products. Many retailers around this province are stocking eco-friendly lawn and garden solutions.

Through our cosmetic-use pesticides research and innovation program, nine projects across this province have received a total of \$432,000 to promote the development of greener alternatives to pest control. It's happening in the lawn care industry, in landscaping, park maintenance and the turf management sector. There is a different way in which we can do it without the use of pesticides on our lawns, and these companies are showing us how to do it.

TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Minister, you know there are hundreds of Ontario First Nation members here today, many here in the audience. I know that a chief from one of my ridings, Chief Sharon Stinson Henry from the Chippewas of Rama, is in the members' gallery.

1110

Minister, there are just 70 days left before your greedy harmonized sales tax grab starts being collected across Ontario. Your Liberals shut down public hearings, and in

the one day of hearings held on your second sales tax increase, you did nothing to stand up for First Nations chiefs, who were given 10 minutes to explain what this \$3-billion tax grab will mean for their communities and your so-called new relationship.

Like all Ontario families, they'll be hit hard by your 8% increase on home heating and gas, particularly those living in northern Ontario. What made you think you would get away with not consulting First Nations about your greedy HST tax grab and how it affects them?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the question. Again, I want to reiterate that we welcome our First Nations to the Legislature today.

In the province of Ontario, when it comes to the GST and the PST, there is no sales tax on-reserve. When a First Nation member is off-reserve, there are two different treatments. When it comes to the federal GST, if an item is to be delivered back to the reserve, then there is a point-of-sale exemption; there is no tax.

In the province of Ontario, for some 30 years when you were in government, when the other party was in government and when we've been in government, we've had a point-of-sale exemption. We believe that is the fair and proper way to administer the point-of-sale exemption, which, I might add, is not available in any other province.

We have said to the federal government, "We believe that you should adopt the administrative practice we have in the province of Ontario." On July 1, they are the sole administrator. We are as frustrated as First Nations—

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, you made the deal. You didn't consult. The McGuinty Liberals did not consult with First Nation chiefs any more than they consulted with other Ontarians. When the PC critic asked for the courtesy of more time for them to be heard, your committee members voted unanimously to step on their rights. You shut down public debate on your greedy \$3-billion tax grab. You defeated 500,000 amendments to the HST bill without even looking at them, and there are just 70 days left—70 days left—to do the right thing for Ontario families, including Ontario's First Nation families, whom you have completely shut out of this.

Will you scrap your plans now to make First Nations and all Ontarians pay this greedy \$3-billion tax grab?

Hon. John Wilkinson: There we have it. There is a party that believes that we should have two sales taxes in the province of Ontario. We believe there should be one. That's what happens in modern economies. By doing this, that will result in some \$47 billion worth of more investment in this province and some 591,000 more jobs. That's why we're doing this. But we need to make sure that taxes are applied fairly and equitably.

We believe that the point-of-sale exemption on the provincial portion of the HST, administered by the federal government, should be maintained. But to make that happen, there is one party that will not come to the table: the federal government. We have asked them, the First

Nations have asked them, and I believe all the parties in this House should ask the federal government to be part of that. You cannot have an exemption—

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

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last week, we had the opportunity to meet with the Premier along with Xstrata here at Queen's Park. Xstrata was pretty clear: They said that not only are they shutting down the refinery and smelter in Timmins, but there will not be other refinery smelters being built in the province of Ontario, including the project up at the Ring of Fire.

My question to you is simply this: Why would Ontario allow itself to be put in the position of not adding value to those natural resources that we are so lucky to have and be blessed with in this province and instead allow those particular metals to be processed outside of Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's important to note that even when this member today asking the question was part of the government of the day, even at that time, the reality for us in Ontario—although acknowledging a very difficult circumstance with Xstrata in Timmins and a very difficult decision for us to have to watch, because while they're not shutting down their whole operation, we want to see all of Xstrata's operations continue to flourish, and it doesn't look like that's happening. But even at that time, and for many years now, Ontario has actually been a net benefit to doing that kind of processing here in Ontario and bringing resources into Ontario. We actually do that more than resources are being sent elsewhere. I'm happy to provide that information to the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and you don't understand the basics of the minerals industry? The issue is simply this: Ontario has an abundance of natural resources in the ground and in the forest. If we don't have an ability to add value to those products, the economy of Ontario will suffer.

Xstrata was clear. There will not be any more refining, there will not be any more smelting done, as far as new projects coming into the province of Ontario. We will become the extractors of the ore, we will transform it into concentrated pellets, and we will ship it out of this province to be added when it comes to value.

So my question to you is, what are you going to do to ensure that Ontario is able to benefit from those natural resources by having value added to them here in Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm sorry, but I do have to set the record straight. The reality is that here in Ontario—and for many years—we bring more minerals into Ontario from elsewhere for processing. Nickel alone: We have 85% of that mineral processed here in Ontario.

As I said, I'm happy to share this information with this member—and perhaps it has changed over the years since he was a member of the government several years ago. But that is our reality. We are home to processing, here in Ontario.

I recognize the difficulty with the Xstrata situation. That is why our government has responded in working with local leadership and providing funding to that local leadership to look for other opportunities that could come that way in that very mine and in that very foundry. That is the kind of work we're prepared to do. I appreciate the difficulty, because we don't want to see job loss anywhere. So the—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Yesterday, I was disturbed to hear the Leader of the Opposition's comments about coal-fired generation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East and the Minister of Economic Development: Have the discussion outside. I don't need the two of you interrupting everyone else.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I could make lunch reservations for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You're not helpful either, member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Perhaps the three of you—and that may be the best thing I can do: send the three of you out for lunch together.

Member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Yesterday, I was disturbed to hear the Leader of the Opposition's comments about coal-fired generation in this province.

As the minister knows, between 1995 and 2003, during the PCs' time in government, coal-fired generation went up by some 127%, while at the same time, carbon dioxide emissions increased by 124%.

Yesterday, the current leader expressed his party's belief that our government should have spent taxpayers' dollars to install scrubbers at coal plants, a band-aid solution to fix the dirty problem they created. That would have cost \$1.6 billion, according to 2007 estimates.

Currently, the government is on track to eliminate coal plants by 2014, with four plants slated to close this year, four years ahead of time. In 2009, the use of coal-fired generation was at its lowest rate in 45 years, down 70%.

Could the minister please assure the House that he does not intend to install scrubbers at coal-fired plants instead of closing them outright?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. I share with the member his disappointment that the Leader of the Opposition continues—he is consistent with their former love affair with coal. He continues that, but it continues to be a misguided position. It continues to be a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable minister that it would be important to talk about government policy and not opposition policy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I agree, Mr. Speaker. We do have to contrast, but I'll try to keep that in mind.

The McGuinty government is reducing emissions and improving the health of Ontarians by eliminating coal. While their party continues to want to cuddle up to coal—and I think that's an interesting contradiction—every year, pollution due to coal generation accounts for the premature deaths of hundreds of Ontarians.

We remain determined that by 2014, this province will be completely out—

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'd like to thank the minister for his response.

Minister, a decade ago, Ontario's energy system was not in good shape. It was an unreliable system with constant shortages, and demand was exceeding supply. The energy sector was hesitant to invest in Ontario. Our infrastructure and the transmission distribution lines that bring power to our homes and businesses had capacity issues and were not keeping up with demand, let alone being able to handle more supply. Quite simply, the government of the day was not making the investments that were needed to ensure a sustainable and reliable electricity system.

Minister, Ontarians know that electricity prices are going up. They also want to know from you that we're making improvements to our system so that the investment they're making in tax dollars delivers good, reliable power.

1120

Hon. Brad Duguid: A lot has changed in the last six or seven years. We've gone from an energy sector that was, frankly, in a state of crisis to an energy sector that's now in a state of stability. We're planning reliable, sustainable energy, with a mixture of emission-free power and conservation programs. That's helping our families across this province use less energy. At the same time, we've brought 8,000 megawatts of new supply online over the last six years, and we plan to bring forward up to 10,000 megawatts online by 2011. That's a huge increase.

That brings stability to a sector that, seven years ago, was in absolute chaos and crisis. It's something that has required some tough decisions on our part today, but it's ensuring that, as we move forward today and into the future, we will have a solid energy supply in this province that's clean, green, and helping us create a green economy—

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

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. As you know, Minister,

today is Earth Day. In the 2003 election campaign, your party promised a 60% diversion rate from landfills by 2007. Your own report last year, *From Waste to Worth*, indicates that only 22% of all waste is being diverted. This includes a 39% contribution from the municipalities, but only 12% from industrial and commercial that is being diverted from landfills. That's your area of responsibility. Why have you failed so miserably in keeping garbage out of our landfills?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I would like to thank the member for asking a question about the environment. I think that's question number three in two years from the Conservative Party on the environment.

We have brought in some very strong new recycling programs. Look at the municipal hazardous waste program—toxic material that used to end up at our landfill sites—which has been very, very successful. We just recently brought in a tire recycling program to take the 13 million or so tires that are produced and used in the province of Ontario out of landfill sites. We have just brought in the electronics recycling program, where basically all electronic equipment now, from televisions to computers—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members from Renfrew and Haldimand–Norfolk.

Minister?

Hon. John Gerretsen: All of these programs, including the electronics recycling program, are done in order to take this stuff out of the landfill sites.

We've done a lot of work over the last four to five years, and we intend to do a lot more. We can always do more work in order to make the environment for the people of Ontario the best that it possibly can be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The problem is that the diversion rate today is worse than it was 10 years ago. You have done nothing to fulfill your promise in the 2003 election.

As a result of your dismal record, the people of West Ottawa, Stittsville and Kanata are forced again to fight for their community because of a proposal to double the size of the Carp landfill, this despite the fact that this site is now in the midst of residential neighbourhoods. This landfill site is intended for ICI waste—your responsibility, the province's responsibility—and the diversion rate now of 12% is less than it was 10 or 12 years ago. What are you going to do to divert ICI waste from landfills and make this huge expansion unnecessary?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, we look forward to that party supporting our new Waste Diversion Act, which will be introduced in this House within the next four to five weeks. We want to make sure that we keep as much out of our landfill sites as possible. We want to work towards a zero-waste society, and we need the help of everybody in this province—in the IC&I sector as well as in the residential sector—to work with us on that. So we look forward to their support when we introduce this

new bill to make producers—the people who actually make the various products, the people who actually package the various products—responsible for their after-life use. We look forward to their participation in that.

We can do a lot better. We've done a lot, and the only way we're going to do it better is by taking stuff out of landfill sites through a new waste diversion—

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

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Yesterday, I asked a question of the Minister of Consumer Services. The question was about an issue which falls squarely within the mandate of her Ministry of Consumer Services. The minister fobbed off the question to the Minister of Economic Development. I'll ask the Minister of Consumer Services, the only cabinet voice for Hamilton, again: What is the minister going to do to protect consumers from Labatt's attempts to establish a monopoly and kill good brewery jobs in Hamilton?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm glad to stand in this House and talk as the member from Hamilton Mountain, as the Minister of Consumer Services. For some reason, this member doesn't really know what consumer services is about. It's about protecting consumers when they buy a house, when they buy a new car, when they go on vacation; to help them with public safety issues. But you know, it gives me an opportunity to share with this member something that is very important, I think, for this whole House to know: I speak for Hamilton. You put Hamilton down. It's time for you to lift up and start talking about Hamilton. It's a great city, Mr. Miller. Come on, speak for Hamilton.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm very hopeful that within the next week there will be a full attendance here, because I'm very much looking forward to delivering a statement reiterating some past comments and putting forth some new comments. I've said this before within this House, and I direct this to every member in this chamber: It is one thing for you to be critical of a government policy or maybe critical of a position, but let's not bring it to a personal level. I think it's incumbent on all of us that, yes, we all have constituencies that we represent and we need to make sure that we are voices, and you are voices, for your constituency, but let's not bring it to the level of personal attacks on one another.

Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess I'm guilty of sticking up for the workers of Hamilton; I'm sorry.

In attempting to control the beer industry in Hamilton, Labatt's offered the city \$2 million, money that would have been paid to get out of the lease before its May 2012 end date. Labatt's tried to tie that money to block any other brewery from using that site. Will the minister from Hamilton stand up for the community, under the

auspices of her ministry, to protect consumers from Labatt's blatant attacks to stifle any brewery competition and kill those skilled workers' chances to maintain their good jobs in Hamilton?

Once again, I apologize for sticking up for the people of Hamilton.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: You don't do that ever. Unbelievable—you never do that.

But it gives me an opportunity to talk about the Ministry of Consumer Services. I want to talk about the Ministry of Consumer Services and just some of the things that this ministry does. This is what we do: Last year, we gave advice and assistance to over 55,000 inquiries and complaints; over 528,000 mediated refunds and cancelled or rescinded contracts for consumers; goods delivered, services started and other remedies in hundreds of cases. In fact, at the same time last year, the ministry compliance and enforcement plan: 597 compliance inspections in field visits; 1,304 charges laid. It's about protecting the consumer when they spend their good, hard-working money on house—

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

1130

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, the McGuinty government recently released the 2010 Ontario budget and the Open Ontario plan, a five-year plan which will see Ontario open to new jobs and growth. I understand that we have received support for both of these initiatives.

AMO President Peter Hume, in supporting the budget on behalf of Ontario municipalities, said, "The budget's overall emphasis on job creation and economic development will also have spin-off benefits for municipal governments," and, "The government's plan for fighting its deficit by and large maintains municipal government and our cost-sharing arrangements with the province."

I'm hoping that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing could elaborate on some of the cost-sharing arrangements—

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: This government recognizes how important it is to work closely with our municipalities. That's why, in partnership with Ontario's municipalities, our government created the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, resulting in a landmark agreement between our government and Ontario's 444 municipalities. The review brought together Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the city of Toronto to look at new ways to fund and deliver services. By 2018, we will have increased: ongoing annual support to municipalities to more than \$3.8 billion, an increase of over 250% since 2003; uploading of Ontario Works benefits, saving \$425 million; uploading court security

costs, saving municipalities \$125 million. By having a 10-year plan—

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

Mr. Mario Sergio: The province must continue to provide programs such as the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review to create a better Ontario. I will be certain to take this information back to my constituents to assure them that this government is continuing to work alongside Ontario municipalities.

In these tough times, hard decisions have to be made. I have heard specifically from the constituents in my riding of York West who are worried that the municipal programs already funded by the government may be affected. I note that the province has worked with the city of Toronto on a number of initiatives across the government, and I'm hoping today that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing can help Ontarians understand exactly what has been done for our fine city of Toronto. Please, Minister, provide us with some information.

Hon. Mr. Bradley: While the economic situation and the provincial deficit may bring us some challenges, I want to assure the member for York West that our commitment to investing in much-needed affordable housing remains unchanged.

In 2009, through the social housing renovation and retrofit program, Toronto was approved for more than \$200 million for retrofits and repairs. Under the affordable housing program extension, the city of Toronto has been allocated more than \$140 million to build 1,000 supportive housing units and provide 122 home ownership loans. We've also prevented 4,500 evictions by providing Toronto with \$7.8 million for a rent bank.

By the time the uploading is fully implemented, Toronto will be saving an estimated \$400 million annually. And \$3.5 billion, I should point out, is what we—

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

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the minister of economic—Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Over a month ago, I asked you if you would listen to the health and safety concerns of Oakville residents and order an individual environmental assessment at the proposed Oakville power plant. You pushed aside my question and you ignored those concerns. Let's see if you're ready to answer. Minister, yes or no, will there be an individual environmental assessment on the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: To be honest, energy and infrastructure is enough. I don't need economic development in my portfolio too, but thank you for suggesting that.

As we always are as a government, we're listening to all stakeholders and all parties when these matters are going through. No energy infrastructure is easy when it comes to siting. It's challenging, it takes time and the proponents often have to work with the local communities. We want to be very respectful of that.

In terms of direct environmental issues, if that's what the member is looking for in terms of a response, I'd be happy to refer the supplementary to the Minister of the Environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'll take that as a no.

Last month, you gave the member from Oakville a pat on the back instead of answering my question about the Oakville power plant, but his Bill 8 has a loophole that makes it a publicity stunt. That loophole exempts any gas-powered plant that has obtained the required approvals, permits and other instruments before the bill receives royal assent. The developer of Oakville's gas-powered plant anticipates that these required documents will be obtained by the summer or fall of 2010—that's this summer or fall.

Minister, will Bill 8 pass before the end of this session in support of Oakville residents, or is it merely a gimmick that will have no effect on the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd better refer this to the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes, we understand, of course, that the Ontario Power Authority has selected a proponent, but let's make it absolutely clear that that proponent needs to meet and complete all the environmental approval requirements under the Environmental Assessment Act and under the Environmental Protection Act.

Ministry of the Environment officials will ensure that the proponent's plan can meet or exceed provincial standards and be operated in an environmentally responsible way. So they need approvals. We're looking at it right now, and in due course, a decision will be made.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Massey Centre in my riding provides support for teen mothers and their babies. It operates a daycare. Today, the daycare is closed and its parents in crisis. The workers are on strike, facing financial hardship. The centre is struggling after years of underfunding.

The Minister of Children and Youth Services has been responsive and open to the centre's administration. For that, she has had their respect. But the minister is not in a position to put money on the table to settle this dispute.

Will you give this ministry the funds it needs so that this centre can put people back to work and put the daycare back in operation? Will you take that action?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I appreciate the member opposite's compliment on my openness to working with this organization.

As I have had the chance to tell him in conversations that we have had about this important issue, we have received a proposal from the Massey Centre. Unfortunately, given the nature of the proposal and the fact that this is in the realm of contract and labour negotiations at

this time, we are unable, and I am unable, to interfere in this important process. I know the member opposite believes, as I do, in the collective bargaining process. It needs to be free from interference. We cannot engage in the dialogue at this time.

But my offer remains open: Separate and apart from contractual negotiations, I look forward to meeting with this organization and talking about the important work that they do in their community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the concern of the minister, but I go back to the Deputy Premier. We have parents and children facing a very difficult time. We have workers who are on the street without an income. We have a situation where underfunding over the years has put people in an impossible position. That needs to be corrected.

We're not asking for people to interfere with collective bargaining; we're asking for help to resolve this situation. Will the Deputy Premier take the action to help the parents and the children at this centre?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: With respect to the process, there is help from the Ministry of Labour. A conciliator is available to assist at all times with these talks.

With respect to assistance for the parents, our regional office has informed me that the Massey Centre Early Learning Centre, which provides child care to families, intends to continue to provide care to families served by this child care centre. The prenatal residential program will be closed for the duration of the strike, but the Massey Centre has arranged alternate accommodation for the prenatal unit residents from other young parent resource centres and other community resource centres.

I encourage both sides to work to resolve the dispute. Once the labour dispute is resolved, I look forward to hearing from the Massey Centre about their programs and working with them to continue to deliver these critically important programs in our city.

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

DEFERRED VOTES

CREATING THE FOUNDATION FOR JOBS AND GROWTH ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 POSANT LES FONDATIONS DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA CROISSANCE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 16, An Act to implement 2010 Budget measures and to enact or amend various Acts / Projet de loi 16, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2010 et édictant ou modifiant diverses lois.

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

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

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

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Albanese, Laura	Hoy, Pat	Ramsay, David
Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Balkissoon, Bas	Jeffrey, Linda	Ruprecht, Tony
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Johnson, Rick	Sandals, Liz
Best, Margaret	Kular, Kuldip	Sergio, Mario
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Smith, Monique
Broten, Laurel C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sorbara, Greg
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Carrroll, Aileen	Levac, Dave	Takhar, Harinder S.
Chan, Michael	Milloy, John	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	Moridi, Reza	Wilkinson, John
Delaney, Bob	Murray, Glen R.	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Oraziotti, David	Zimmer, David
Duncan, Dwight	Pendergast, Leeanna	
Fonseca, Peter	Phillips, Gerry	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Sterling, Norman W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 46; the nays are 21.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 21, 2010, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

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

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a message from the Honourable David C. Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2011, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Dated April 22, 2010.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today, I'm very pleased to rise in this Legislature, as this is Ontario Coaches Week, and I would like to introduce the following people who are in the audience with us today: Paul Connelly from

Uxbridge, who is a high school coach; Sheilagh Croxon from Etobicoke, who is the chair of the Coaches Association of Ontario; Ann Doggett from Toronto, who has been a field hockey coach in the high-performance program since 1998; Tracy Angus from Burlington, who has been a judo coach for over 23 years; Michael Broughton of Toronto, who is a wheelchair basketball coach for Ontario's provincial team; and Susan Kitchen of Toronto, who is the executive director of the Coaches Association of Ontario. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to introduce for a second time today—and it is equally a pleasure—the co-hosts of Good Day GTA on my favourite radio station, Classical 96.3 FM, Mike Duncan and Jean Stilwell, in the east members' gallery; and also to welcome a constituent of mine, Susan Kitchen, whom the minister just previously introduced, of Estoril Road in Meadowvale in Mississauga–Streetsville.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This year marks the fifth annual National Victims of Crime Awareness Week in Canada. Across our nation, we remember that every victim matters. We keep in mind the impact that crime can have on victims, on families and on friends. We acknowledge those who have been victims of crime and those whom we have lost as a result of crime. We highlight that a crime may occur in a moment, but that for victims of crime, the impact can have a lasting effect.

We recognize the work of those people in our province whose commitment helps support victims of crime. But during this week, it is also important that we raise awareness of where we can do better and ensure that our justice system and our society treat victims of crime with the utmost dignity and respect.

The Ontario PC caucus has a long history of supporting victims of crime. In 1995, we introduced and passed the Victims' Bill of Rights, which begins: "The people of Ontario believe that victims of crime, who have suffered harm and whose rights and securities have been violated by crime, should be treated with compassion and fairness." These are words the PC caucus, and our leader, Tim Hudak, will always stand by.

The PC caucus maintains the belief that the best support we can provide is to reduce crime, but where there are victims of crime, we'll continue to demand that their rights and dignities be respected.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Peter Kormos: Down where I come from in Welland riding—Port Colborne, Wainfleet, Welland, Thorold, St. Catharines—people know their pharmacists and people have respect for their pharmacists. I'm talking

about neighbourhood pharmacists, community pharmacists. I'm talking about women and men who, in some cases, have served two, three and four generations of folks.

That's why I've got in my office now almost 500 signed messages from constituents—more are coming, and they'll keep on coming—telling me, and asking me to tell the McGuinty Liberals, that people in Ontario depend upon the convenient, accessible advice and services they get from their local pharmacy, that people in Ontario, just like they do down where I come from, want to ensure that their pharmacists are there when they need them. They want to know that they can talk to their pharmacist after work or when they can't get to their doctor's office or when their doctor's office is closed. That's why they're telling me to tell Mr. McGuinty to stop his attack on small-town pharmacists.

Do you want to take on drug prices? Then muster up the courage, which I suspect is hard to find, to take on the big multinational drug companies. Don't beat up on the pharmacists.

If you think I'm the only voice saying that, you're sadly mistaken. Folks like Gilda Gatti from Thorold are saying that. Folks like Mrs. R. Quirion from Welland are saying that. People like Marilyn Boccioletti from Thorold are saying that. Margaret Pratt from Port Colborne is saying that. Ron James from Thorold is saying that. C. Valenti from Thorold is saying that. Betti Michael from Port Robinson is saying just that, and so is C. Schrock from Thorold and hundreds of others.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Today is Earth Day, and I'm very proud that our government has delivered the largest green energy initiatives in Canadian history.

Under the Green Energy Act, our government's most green energy initiative is to build 186 new green energy projects. Some of these projects are in my riding. Four solar and wind projects that will be run by Ontario-based companies have been awarded contracts in Northumberland–Quinte West. These projects will boost our local economy by bringing new jobs for the construction, operation and maintenance of these green energy projects, and will provide cleaner energy for our homes.

When taken together with our earlier announcement of 510 green energy projects, these additional 186 projects will boost our green energy generation to 2,500 megawatts, enough electricity to power 600,000 homes. These investments in building green energy sources in my communities and communities across Ontario are important for the future of our province.

We all know that the world is at a crucial point in reversing climate change. We need to be part of the solution, and that means investing in green energy sources that reduce our environmental footprint. The steps our government is taking today are an important part of reducing Ontario's carbon footprint.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Frank Klees: Yesterday, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care urged us to remind all Ontarians about the urgent need to register their consent to donate their organs or tissue.

Unfortunately, the well-intended wishes of many who have signed a donor card will never be known or acted upon, because their intention has not been formally registered on the OHIP registration data bank.

That's why I'm calling on all members of the House today to support the following resolution that will make registration both convenient and meaningful:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the government expand the opportunity for Ontarians to register as organ and tissue donors by creating an organ registration link on the ServiceOntario website, which will allow Ontarians to register as organ donors online, using their OHIP number, and that the registration will be filed in real time on the OHIP database.”

This single initiative will exponentially increase organ donor registration in our province, and I'm hopeful that the government will support this proposal.

As this is National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, on behalf of the PC caucus and, I'm sure, of all members of the Legislature and all Ontarians, I want to express our appreciation to Mr. Frank Markel, president and CEO of Trillium Gift of Life Network, and his staff for their dedication to making organ and tissue donation the gift of life for many Ontarians.

1310

CULTURE DAYS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Earlier this week, a new and innovative Culture Days initiative launched Canada-wide. Our Ontario arts and culture scene attracts travellers and art lovers from around the world. From theatres to museums, festivals to art galleries, music to dance, Ontario has it all.

Culture Days is a national collaborative volunteer movement to raise the awareness, accessibility, participation and engagement of all Canadians in the arts and cultural life of their communities. The new Culture Days initiative is based on the success of the existing Journées de la culture in Quebec, which began a decade ago. Quebec's experience has shown that Journées de la culture attracts some 300,000 participants annually.

Culture Days will allow individual communities to mobilize amateurs, enthusiasts and professional performers to showcase events like free talks and workshops, interactive events and performances. The project encourages people to become more engaged and involved with local arts and culture.

Ontarians will get personally involved in the arts scenes in their own communities in any way they can imagine. In the GTA, Classical 96.3 FM will be there to tell us about it and to keep Ontario at the forefront of the arts scene.

LEARNING ENRICHMENT FOUNDATION

Mrs. Laura Albanese: It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to talk about the Learning Enrichment Foundation in York South–Weston. LEF is one of our most active organizations and a service leader. For over 28 years, the Learning Enrichment Foundation has worked to represent the needs of our community by offering vital employment services, job training, language and literacy programs, child care and a wide range of services to newcomers.

Minister of Children and Youth Services Laurel Broten and I recently had a chance to see the high quality of the work performed by LEF as part of a tour of their facilities. This included a visit to their child care centre in York South–Weston.

As announced in the 2010 Ontario budget, our provincial government will be providing an ongoing investment of \$63.5 million annually to permanently fill the gap left by the federal government, which ended its commitment to provide the ongoing fund necessary to maintain about 8,500 child care spaces across Ontario. This will ensure continued access to quality child care for low-income families and agencies such as LEF so that they may participate in the workforce.

I commend the employees at LEF on their hard work and dedication to assisting the families and the entire community of York South–Weston.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Ted Arnott: The government's time allocation motion with respect to Bill 16 is especially troubling, given that the important budget bill will be sent to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and that important committee will only have one day of public hearings to listen to the people on the budgetary policy of the government. We know that contained in Bill 16 are the provisions that will negatively impact pharmacy in the province of Ontario.

The McGuinty Liberals have declared war on Ontario's pharmacists, and small-town residents will likely be caught in the crossfire. The Minister of Health needs to withdraw her proposals to cut pharmacy service, tone down her rhetoric and sit down with the pharmacists' association to seek common ground. If she doesn't, many of our independent pharmacies, especially those in small towns, will be the losers.

Pharmacies are integral to Ontario's health system, and patients trust their pharmacists to provide and monitor their medication. That's why this is a fight that Dalton McGuinty cannot win. We know that the health minister maintains that the changes are needed to control the cost of drugs, but she has ignored the constructive proposals that the pharmacy association has presented.

We know that Ontarians have now paid \$15 billion in health tax that Premier McGuinty promised he wouldn't levy. We seem to be paying more and more but receiving

less and less. We also know the Auditor General has criticized the McGuinty Liberals' eHealth program, which was intended to create computerized patient records. It cost \$1 billion, yet has delivered little in the way of results.

We're wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on one hand—

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

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Rick Johnson: Our government wants to make prescription medications more affordable for Ontarians. That's why we're introducing legislative reforms that will improve patient care. Our plan will provide patients with access to more affordable prescription drugs. We will continue to increase funding to the health care system as a whole.

There is no question that these changes need to be made. Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs than patients in other countries. In some cases, we pay five times more than Americans for the same medications. Ontarians deserve fairer, more affordable prices, and they deserve political representatives who will stand up for their right to value for their money. With these drug reforms, our government is doing just that.

Unfortunately, the members of the opposition have failed to join us in standing up for Ontarians. Instead, they are standing up for the status quo, a professional allowance system that is open to widespread abuse and allows drug prices to be unreasonably inflated. But our government believes that these reforms are the right thing to do. We're making these changes for patients and hard-working Ontarians who are paying too much for prescription medications. Ontarians deserve a fairer deal.

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On April 23, the people of Turkey will celebrate a unique event, National Sovereignty and Children's Day.

The founder of the Turkish republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, dedicated April 23 to the children of the country to emphasize that they are the future of the new nation. It was April 23, 1920, during the War of Independence, that the Grand National Assembly met in Ankara and laid down the foundation of a new independent, secular and modern republic from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. In unprecedented moves, he dedicated the sovereignty day to the children and entrusted in the hands of the youth the protection of this sovereignty and independence.

The very first Children's Day in the world was celebrated on April 23, 1929. In Turkey today, schools participate in week-long ceremonies marked by performances in all fields in stadiums watched by the entire nation. Among the activities on this day, the children send their reps to replace state officials and high-ranking bureaucrats in their offices. The President, the Prime

Minister, the cabinet ministers and provincial governors all turn over their positions to children's representatives. These children in turn sign executive orders relating to educational and environmental policies. On this day, the children also replace the parliamentarians in the Grand National Assembly and hold a special session to discuss matters concerning children's issues.

What a great example for us to follow. This coming Sunday, April 25, the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations will be celebrating this event with performances by hundreds of Turkish and Canadian children. All of us will receive an invitation.

In the east gallery today, helping us to celebrate this International Children's Day, are the new consul general of the Republic of Turkey, Mustafa Bilgen; Mr. Mehmet Bor, the president, Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations; Mr. Ismail Vataner, the vice-president of that federation; Mr. Gelal Uçar, president of the Turkish Culture and Folklore Society; Mrs. Yildiz Ünsal, director of the Turkish Federation Community Foundation of Canada; and Mr. Ahmet Gökgöz, president of the Istanbul Technical University Alumni Association. To them we say:

Remarks in Turkish.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think after today it might be most interesting to replace all the members with children for one day. The principal would gladly love to see any one of you sit in the chair for a question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think we would start with the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

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

Bill 231, An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act / Projet de loi 231, Loi modifiant la Loi électorale et la Loi sur le financement des élections.

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 REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present the first report, 2010, from the Standing Committee on Regu-

lations and Private Bills and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Prue presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Michael Prue: Very briefly, Mr. Speaker. The committee worked together on this very onerous task; it looked at those items that were brought before it and makes recommendations to the House.

Having said that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Prue has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

1320

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed. Minister?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 19 be waived.

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

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EARTH DAY

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: It is my pleasure to rise in the House to ask members to join me in recognizing the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. Happy Earth Day.

Every day we benefit from what the earth gives us: the air, water and food that sustain us. Earth Day offers us an opportunity to notice and appreciate nature.

Protecting and ensuring the sustainable use of our natural resources is my formal responsibility as the Minister of Natural Resources. It's a responsibility I don't take lightly, and it's a responsibility that I'm proud to share with all Ontarians.

I would like to share news with the members about two initiatives that promote a healthier, greener province.

Today, we issue a new Natural Heritage Reference Manual for Ontario. This manual contains important new guidelines to protect our natural heritage. When we plan how land will be used, we must do so in a thoughtful way that respects and protects our rich natural heritage. This second edition of the manual provides guidance for

implementing the 2005 provincial policy statement. It guides how the natural heritage policies contained in that document should be implemented.

Ontarians want their communities to remain healthy, attractive, strong and viable. That means planning for natural heritage on a system-wide basis to conserve the province's natural heritage when making land use planning decisions.

This manual is a key tool for integrating the conservation of our biodiversity into land use planning, as identified in Ontario's biodiversity strategy. It supports the implementation of the Endangered Species Act and reflects the objectives of our action plan on climate change. This updated manual will be a valuable tool for municipalities and others involved in municipal planning.

I would like to thank the many organizations and individuals who provided suggestions to my ministry for inclusion in this manual. I would especially like to recognize the participation of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; the Building Industry and Land Development Association; Conservation Ontario; the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; the Ontario Heritage Trust; Ontario Nature; the Ontario Professional Planners Institute; the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association; and the school of planning at the University of Waterloo.

The new Natural Heritage Reference Manual is now available online.

This Earth Day is also celebrating the anniversary of another initiative. A year ago, we launched our online tree atlas. It's a wonderful resource for students, parents and teachers, full of information about Ontario's native trees. That also makes it a useful tool for anyone who's interested in planting a tree. To make it even better, we are adding advice on the most appropriate native trees for homeowners in northern Ontario. You can find the atlas at ontario.ca/treetatlas. The website includes the ability for a two-way conversation between the ministry and Ontarians so they can share their tree planting stories.

As part of our Plant a Tree challenge, individuals, schools and community groups have planted almost half a million trees. I urge members who are planting a tree this month, and indeed all Ontarians, to share their stories with us at ontario.ca/plantatree.

I'm pleased to share news of these two important initiatives with my colleagues in the House. I hope all Ontarians will take the time on this Earth Day to celebrate the gifts nature gives us and to recognize the importance of protecting our natural resources.

ONTARIO COACHES WEEK

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Later today I will have the pleasure of hosting a reception to honour coaches throughout Ontario, in celebration of Ontario Coaches Week 2010.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Coaches Association of Ontario, the CAO, for their work in planning this important week. We value the CAO's role

as a coordinating body for amateur and high-performance coaches.

This year, Ontario Coaches Week coincides with National Volunteer Week. While many coaches take on this noble duty as a profession, many coaches are volunteers and are great examples for all of us. Indeed, this week is an opportune time for us all to take an active role in our communities. One way to do that is by picking up a whistle, the theme of coaches week.

The Ministry of Health Promotion recognizes the numerous benefits of participating in sport and physical activity. Active living enhances quality of life, promotes a greater sense of well-being, and builds stronger communities.

This government continues to support amateur sport for the health of individuals and to strengthen our communities, and coaches play an integral role in achieving our goal of a healthier Ontario.

Coaches are role models, mentors and dedicated individuals. From the parent who coaches their child's baseball team, to coaches who watch with pride as their athletes compete in the Ontario Summer Games, the Ontario Winter Games, the Ontario ParaSport Winter Games, the Canada Games and, recently, the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games, they are key to helping children learn teamwork and develop self-confidence.

Coaches not only help athletes pursue athletic excellence, but they can also play a role in individual athletes' success. That is why the McGuinty government is committed to supporting coaches.

Since 2003, funding to amateur sport has increased through initiatives such as our Quest for Gold program, with a government investment of up to \$52 million to sport in Ontario. Over the past year alone, the McGuinty government has provided over \$1 million to fund coaches in Ontario. The Coaches Association has received funding to train and educate coaches through programs like the national coaching certification program and the enhanced coaching program.

Throughout the week, the Coaches Association of Ontario has been offering free coach training for individuals of all ages and athletic abilities, for experienced and new coaches. Courses are available for those who want to coach women and girls, children, athletes with disabilities, and those in remote or underserved communities.

We value the role that coaches and the Coaches Association of Ontario play in helping us achieve our goal of building a healthier Ontario, and we value their role in supporting sport and recreation across the province.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the coaches and Coaches Association of Ontario members again, who will be attending the reception and who are here with us in the gallery.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Tell us where it is.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I certainly will let you know where it is as soon as I'm finished with my statement.

I think it is appropriate to give them a round of applause and respect for their continued efforts to inspire, mentor and motivate so many Ontarians.

Ontario Coaches Week is a celebration of the values and benefits of sport in our communities. Leadership, teamwork and respect are some of the values that coaches embody and share, values that will serve their athletes well in sport and throughout their entire lives.

As excitement builds for the 2015 Pan American Games and Parapan American Games, aspiring athletes all across Ontario will be pushing themselves to be the best and to emulate their sport heroes and sheroes. Behind those athletes will be coaches bringing out the best in each and every one of us.

In closing, I want to thank and congratulate coaches all across Ontario. And I take this opportunity to congratulate Ontario's male and female coaches of the year, Anthony McCleary and Wendy Morgan.

I also want to encourage Ontarians to show support for all coaches and consider picking up a whistle and becoming role models in their communities.

Interruption.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Coaches, this one is for you.

1330

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think the minister just got the yellow card. She knows that that was out of order.

Responses?

EARTH DAY

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to both ministerial statements today.

I guess I'll start with the Ministry of Natural Resources statement, and I certainly want to recognize that today is the 40th anniversary of Earth Day. But there are many questions that I have as to what the Ministry of Natural Resources, which was once a great ministry, is up to these days.

Way back in 1977, my father had the pleasure of being the Minister of Natural Resources. In fact, he served as a few different ministers, but that was his favourite ministry. That summer, or that year, he went about the province and learned the ministry by actually trying to meet every employee of the Ministry of Natural Resources. I still run into people who worked for the Ministry of Natural Resources who remember that. He also stated that when a minister made a decision, it was actually carried out by the civil service, which was not always the case with other ministries.

But what are we seeing now? We're seeing that the McGuinty government has actually scrapped the fish and wildlife division of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and I think that has raised some real alarm bells in the outdoor community.

We're seeing that the special purpose account, to which the money is supposed to be dedicated—the special purpose account is for the money that comes from all the fees and the hunting and fishing licences, and it's all supposed to go back into activities to preserve the environment and to Ministry of Natural Resources

expenses. There hasn't been a report done on that special purpose account. In fact, we just recently learned that the HST—and there was never any tax on hunting or fishing licences previously—is going to be applied on fishing and hunting licences in Ontario. The minister writes to the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters that, as required by legislation, the Ministry of Natural Resources will apply the HST to all licences and fees, including fish and wildlife and Ontario park fees, and that the money will be remitted to the federal government. It won't be going to the special purpose account, and that's a real blow for the outdoor communities and those who care about the natural Ontario.

I'm rushing a little bit because I still have my other statement to respond to. I did want to get something in about the Endangered Species Act, which was mentioned in the minister's statement. I would just say that I, as the critic, was led down the garden path on that when I was told the Crown Forest Sustainability Act would apply and that the Endangered Species Act would not override it. I think the past minister—and I don't blame the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane—two ministers ago was also under that belief. I will leave it at that and switch to coaches week.

ONTARIO COACHES WEEK

Mr. Norm Miller: I'd simply like to say to the minister that the opposition are waiting for our invitation to the reception. To the guests here today, we would love to come to the reception. However, so far we haven't been invited.

But I would like to recognize the good work that coaches do around the province of Ontario. They have a huge influence on many young people. They teach the skills of sport, including the value of teamwork, the discipline and reward that come from the hard work and perseverance and training.

In my youth, the one sport I took up was downhill skiing. I had the pleasure of having—our phys. ed. teacher was also our coach. His name was Lanny McQuain. He did a wonderful job of getting individual skiers to think more about the team, and we had some success as a result of that.

Three of my four kids played hockey, and I had the pleasure over 15 years to be involved in coaching, with my limited coaching abilities, and to act as a trainer and do other things on their hockey teams and other hockey teams. Certainly, I've seen first-hand the hard work that coaches do in many sports, whether it's soccer or swimming or the paragames or cross-country skiing, so many different activities out there. I would like to congratulate and thank those coaches, because they make a big difference out there. I know they are very dedicated. They're getting up in the middle of the night to be at those 6:30 a.m. practices and do so many different things for the activities they are involved with.

In many cases, if a young person is involved in sport at a young age, they will develop a healthy lifestyle and

stick with the enjoyment of doing things and being involved the rest of their life, and that is a real benefit for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses.

Mr. Paul Miller: Like the member for the opposition party—he's the critic for sports and I'm the critic for the third party. I guess I lost my invitation; I don't know. I can't find it. I just found out about it today, but that's okay.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, it's not.

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, I'm a little hurt, but anyway.

This is a response to the minister's statement on sports. I join my colleagues in congratulating the many men and women who volunteer their time to coach individuals, teams and other groups in a variety of sports, arts, school studies, physical fitness and many other activities. My goodness, we even have life and financial; we have healthy living and many other new coaching fields that are opening up, so the business is expanding.

Coaches can be such positive influences on our youth and such good supports for us as we age. Our most recent display of coaching excellence was shown event by event, day by day during the weeks of the Olympic and Paralympic sporting events. Many of those athletes began their career path because of the positive influence of their coaches during their formative years.

As a young person with an ingrained love of sports, I can remember the many coaches who helped me to refine my abilities, to focus my attention and to execute the technique so that I could become a confident competitor. Certainly, there were some very tough coaches who pushed me harder than I felt was needed, but that extra push made me successful and helped me to develop as a competitor and as a person.

When I reflect on the many coaches I had as a young boy, as a teen and as an adult, I think of how we just accepted that they were there, without really appreciating their time, their effort and the commitment these coaches made, day in and day out, year in and year out. On reflection, I realize they were the glue of so many activities that we just knew would be there for us to participate in. What a shock it would have been if they weren't there for one season.

I'm very honoured to thank the many coaches who influenced my life, my community and my province as we celebrate the fifth coaches week in Ontario. During this week, coaches across our province are recruited, developed and celebrated, and I join my colleagues in thanking and congratulating the many coaches who volunteer their time, improving individuals, teams and activities that make our communities stronger and safer places to grow.

EARTH DAY

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the minister on the Natural Heritage Reference Manual announcement, I'm pleased to speak to the importance of protecting Ontario's vast and valuable natural heritage, and I hope this

new edition brings clarity to the people of Ontario about what we need to protect a wonderful and unique natural heritage—I think, unique in all of the world.

But I am not terribly optimistic—I wish I was—because of what is happening in Ontario today. Ontario is continuing to lose much of its best farmland. We have the best farmland in all of Canada, and in fact, most of it is in southern Ontario. But it is under threat. Some 600,000 acres of farmland were lost to development between the years 1996 to 2006, the most recent year for which there are statistics. I think this government is not—although they are doing something, they are not doing enough to control urban sprawl.

The vast majority of lower-tier municipalities have yet to sign on to conform to the Places to Grow Act. I don't know why that's the case, but it is in fact true. The government has not done much to strike down the backroom deals with developers, such as what is taking place at Bradford West Gwillimbury, allowing them to pave over prime farmland. This government is refusing to ban developer lawsuits against citizens' groups, which prevent citizens from speaking up against urban sprawl. That was part of your legislation which allowed developers to do that—and now, by proposing to water down environmental approvals and further reduce public participation as part of its Open Ontario business-friendly thrust. Sprawl is so bad in southern Ontario that Victor Doyle, a senior planner for municipal affairs, wrote a personal letter to the Minister of Infrastructure condemning the government's Simcoe growth strategy last December.

Ontarians value their heritage; they value their natural heritage. They want to protect it for their children. They want to protect it for the future. They want to do everything possible.

1340

I commend the minister for this volume if it helps even one bit. But I think the government also has to do more than just put out a volume for the public. They have to start taking actions that are stronger than we have taken in the past. They have to start taking actions to protect our farmland, to protect our environment and to make sure that this is a heritage for all mankind.

PETITIONS

POWER PLANT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition signed by over 40 members of the medical community in Oakville. It reads this way:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, in view of the recent natural-gas-fired explosion in Connecticut and the placement in Ontario of such facilities in close proximity to homes and schools;

“Whereas, in view of the absence of enforceable standards for the level of fine particulate matter in ambient air since it was declared a toxic substance one

decade ago under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act;

“Whereas, in view of the premature mortality and adverse health effects, largely attributable to fine particulate matter, which may arise from large natural-gas-fired generation facilities close to population centres;

“We, the undersigned physicians, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to institute the following:

“(1) A moratorium on the development of all natural-gas-fired power plants until appropriate safety setbacks are legislated.

“(2) The legislation of regulatory standards for fine particulate matter and the further regulation of precursor gaseous pollutants that contribute to its secondary formation.

“(3) A requirement that all natural-gas-fired power plants undergo an individual environmental assessment.”

I agree with this, and even though I’m not a physician, I’m going to sign it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Whereas Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I agree with this petition, and I’ll sign it.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has been received from Mr. Barnabic, who’s the president of the association that is responsible for Consumer Reports. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

“Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one’s good credit rating;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 7, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature ... be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

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

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

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

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

Since I agree with this petition, I’m delighted to sign it as well.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that has been signed by thousands of residents of Oakville.

“Whereas the province of Ontario, through the Ontario Energy Board, has selected a location for a gas-fired electrical generating power station within three kilometres of 16 schools and more than 11,000 homes; and

“Whereas the Oakville-Clarkson airshed is already one of the most polluted in Canada; and

“Whereas no independent environmental assessment has been completed for this proposed building location; and

“Whereas Ontario has experienced a significant reduction in demand for electrical power; and

“Whereas a recent accident at a power plant in Connecticut demonstrated the dangers that nearby residents face;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to immediately rescind the existing plan to build a power plant at or near the current planned location ... on Royal Windsor Drive in Oakville and initiate a complete review of area power needs and potential building sites, including environmental assessments and a realistic assessment of required danger zone buffer areas.”

I agree with the petition. I’m pleased to sign my name to it and pass it to page Mitchell.

POWER PLANT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a petition that is signed by a lot of members who are in the audience today.

“Whereas Ontario does not have legislation that mandates separation distances between natural gas power plants and residential communities;

“Whereas experts have suggested there are considerable health concerns associated with the emissions from natural gas power plants, such as PM_{2.5}, which has been linked to decreased lung function, development of chronic bronchitis, and cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and strokes;

“Whereas public safety concerns have been raised about locating natural gas power plants in residential neighbourhoods following the explosion at a facility in Middletown, Connecticut;

“Whereas the Ontario Power Authority has selected a site to build a 945-megawatt natural gas power plant that is 320 metres from the nearest school, less than 400 metres from a residential community;

“Whereas Bill 8, An Act to establish separation distances for natural gas power plants, was introduced into the Ontario Legislature;

“Whereas Bill 8 would prohibit the construction of a natural gas power plant unless the facility is located a minimum of 1,500 metres away from any land zoned for residential use or any land on which an educational facility, day nursery or health care facility is located;

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

“That all members of provincial Parliament support Bill 8, An Act to establish separation distances for natural gas power plants.”

I obviously agree with this, will sign it and send it down with Tudor.

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

“Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we’re not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn’t found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

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

“That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so

that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area.”

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: The petition on identity theft that I read previously was given to me by the consumer federation of Canada, not the association responsible for Consumer Reports. I’d like to straighten out that record.

I have a petition the subject of which is, “Stop Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles,” that was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario under Bill 56. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the growing number of unlawful firearms in motor vehicles is threatening innocent citizens and our police officers;

“Whereas police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are the only people allowed to possess firearms; and

“Whereas a growing number of unlawful firearms are transported, smuggled and being found in motor vehicles; and

“Whereas impounding motor vehicles and suspending driver’s licences of persons possessing unlawful firearms would aid the police in their efforts to make our streets safer;

“We, the undersigned citizens, strongly request and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law, so that we can reduce the number of crimes involving unlawful firearms in our communities.”

I certainly agree with this petition, and I’m delighted to send it to you through page Harry.

1350

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: “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, condo maintenance fees, 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, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, vet 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 will sign that petition and I also happen to agree with it.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas multiple sclerosis (MS) is a debilitating disease affecting a great number of people in Ontario; and

“Whereas there has been a new treatment discovery called the liberation treatment, which addresses chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency (CCVI) and that has been seen to provide relief for many MS sufferers,

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

“That the government of Ontario invest in research regarding this new treatment and make it available to victims of MS in Ontario as a listed procedure in a timely manner.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and send it to the table with page Owen.

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I promise this is my last petition today, but I had to get this in before the time elapses. It's actually to the Minister of Transportation, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing; and

“Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by” this “dilapidated St. Clair Avenue-Old Weston Road bridge; and

“Whereas this bridge” and its underpass “will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides, creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow.”

Since I agree, I'm really delighted to present this petition to you. I'm going to give it to Tara to present it to you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ENHANCING THE ABILITY OF INCOME SUPPORT RECIPIENTS TO BE FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 REHAUSSANT L'AUTONOMIE FINANCIÈRE DES BÉNÉFICIAIRES DU SOUTIEN DU REVENU

Mr. Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 and the Taxation Act, 2007 /
Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur le Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Good afternoon, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to explain a bit about Bill 23, a bill to enhance the ability of people on disability—those on support—to be more financially independent.

The purpose of the proposed legislation is several-fold: first, to encourage employers to take on more people with disabilities by providing employer tax reductions; secondly, to allow recipients who are working to keep more of their earnings; thirdly, to allow recipients basically to have more money in the bank, to retain more assets; and lastly, to allow ODSP recipients to retain any child support payments instead of having them clawed back by the program.

I will point out that this is not a spending initiative—if it was, it would not qualify as a private member's bill; this is an incentive for people to work, to save and also to foster employment.

This winter, one could not help but be touched by seeing Alexandre Bilodeau and his brother Frédéric. His brother was born with cerebral palsy. “He's been an inspiration for me since I was so young,” Alexandre said of his brother after clinching Canada's first gold medal at Vancouver in that triumphant moment they shared at the bottom of the moguls. These brothers became my Olympic heroes. Alexandre's and Frédéric's story reminds us that life is not perfect and can be downright difficult for those with disabilities.

Members present will certainly know that our constituency offices are so often busy trying to help people wade through the myriad of rules and requirements with regard to ODSP. As we all know, the myth that ODSP is a program designed to pay lazy people to stay at home is exactly that; it's a myth.

Currently, government legislation and regulation, in my view, inadvertently encourage recipients to be more

dependent rather than independent. The government, as we know, has asked the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council to provide it with immediate advice on quick changes that could be made to ODSP: changes that would not require lengthy study and time frames to implement.

The bill we're debating today also falls in line with recommendations from associations like Community Living Ontario and the ODSP Action Coalition, and I know that there are a number of people here today from the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. According to Community Living Ontario, the ODSP Action Coalition and other groups, a broad strategy is needed to address disincentives for employment, to enable ODSP recipients to keep more of what they earn as well as to enable asset-building strategies. This bill, in my view, does just that. It would enable recipients to build their own capacity to escape the cycle of poverty that the rules and regulations have oftentimes thrown at them—again, through no fault of their own.

For example, there are about 120,000 people alone in Ontario who have an intellectual disability, and that group experiences much higher levels of poverty as a group than any other sector of society. In fact—and I think these figures came to us from the finance committee—73% of these folks live below the poverty line.

This past February, I put forward a motion at the finance committee pre-budget hearings calling for three things: (1) encourage further employment of ODSP recipients, (2) allow recipients to keep more of their earnings, and (3) allow recipients to retain more assets. I was quite heartened that this motion received support from all three political parties on the finance committee. It passed the vote, and further to that, it did receive unanimous consent to be formally submitted by the finance committee to Gail Nyberg's social assistance review advisory group.

Since I introduced this legislation on March 31, I have been getting lots of emails of support and thanks for an initiative like this. I don't consider this my initiative; this has come from so many other people I have attempted to recognize.

1400

Many of the emails are from people who are on Ontario disability support themselves. Many are from parents who continue to care for children, and from parents who also continue to care for adults with disabilities. Many ODSP recipients have family; they have friends. They do their utmost to support them, but what happens when those supports are no longer there?

The Ontario disability support program is obviously one we cannot do without. However, there is a pressing need for a few changes to bring it into the times. While ODSP may have met the needs of Ontarians in the past, today many recipients feel they are being condemned to a life of a lower income and squeezed assets. It's scooping their child support payments and discouraging them from working, as well as providing little incentive for employers to enhance the abilities that are there.

For example, the Job Opportunity Information Network has a vision of a society in which persons with disabilities are part of an inclusive network. This is a GTA-based group, and I'll quote information I received from the group: "Witness, day after day, the tremendous determination, the ability and talent that citizens with a disability are able and want to contribute to the Ontario workforce." So that's one reason I thought it was important to have a tax credit for small business and other companies who choose to hire ODSP recipients.

In 2009, a COMPAS survey showed that 26% of employers said the perceived expense related to hiring an employee with a disability discouraged them. Again, I feel that this bill is a starting point to attempt to alleviate that kind of concern.

Bill 23, the Enhancing the Ability of Income Support Recipients to be Financially Independent Act, in my view, does exactly that: It enhances. The bill provides for those on ODSP to earn and then to keep more of their own money. Many folks on ODSP obviously want to work at least part-time. They appreciate the satisfaction that comes from earning money, from being part of the team—being in the lunchroom, for example—and contributing to their community.

The other fact of the matter is that trying to run a household on an ODSP income is virtually impossible. However, as it stands now, working ODSP recipients have their wages clawed back by 50%. Again, this provides very little incentive to work.

This bill suggests that working recipients retain the first \$700 of additional monthly income, or \$1,000 if there is a spouse. It raises asset limits from the current \$5,000 to \$12,000 for individuals, or \$20,000 if there is a spouse also on disability, and also allows recipients to retain child support income. Right now, child support is deducted, dollar for dollar, from ODSP cheques.

I have a quote from Nancy Vander Plaats. Nancy is co-chair of the ODSP Action Coalition.

Mr. Michael Prue: She's up there. There she is, right up there.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Oh, okay. I missed Nancy. Good, good. Your words, Nancy: "We've been advocating for rule changes like these for many years. It's good to see this coming before the Legislature."

As I've said before, since the introduction of this bill, I've been inundated with so many messages: messages from parents who are worried about their disabled children's future. I would like to read a quote from a mother from Kanata. "I strongly support these changes as they are long overdue. My daughter is on ODSP and working part-time. She is barely making ends meet because her wages are clawed back at a rate of 50%. To allow her to retain the first \$700 earned would be a tremendous step forward in helping her out of poverty. This would boost her income and her living standard."

Bill 23 is not designed to make ODSP recipients wealthy by any means, but it would allow them to enjoy some more of life's pleasures that we here certainly have the opportunity to afford.

I don't want anyone to have any thought that this could open the door for any fraudulent activity. There are obviously other ways—enforcement provisions—to prevent any of those kinds of characters from taking advantage of something like this.

An email from another mom: She writes, “I support these proposed changes 100%. With a daughter on the receiving end of ODSP who works full-time but cannot afford a car, insurance or some of the items others take for granted, like cable TV or a safe place to live, this change, if passed, will empower her, help with self-esteem issues and hopefully give her hope that even though she has a disability she isn't penalized for wanting to work full-time.”

In closing, in my view, most people on ODSP don't want to rely on the program completely. However, I see a situation where government makes it difficult for them to be more on their own. The nickel-and-diming of recipients, if you will, with so many of the other rules and regulations and red tape that I haven't discussed today, is counterproductive. Society must do whatever it can to decrease the obstacles placed in the way of those who struggle on a daily basis, especially those on disability, so that they can live with dignity and, in many cases, independently. We have an opportunity, those of us in this House, to lead by example on this particular issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I am honoured to stand here and speak in support of this bill. Oftentimes in this Legislature, I feel that I am a lone voice, so I welcome my colleague for this bill and for the initiative that he has taken.

I know it was only a number of years ago when people were in this Legislature talking about those on welfare with disdain, talking about those who were suffering on ODSP with disdain and trying to take away the very assets that they enjoy—taking away up to 31% of the payments that were made to them to make sure that they lived a life of even more miserable poverty than they had become accustomed to. I look around, in the years that I have been here—and it's closing in on nine years now—at the very little progress or almost no progress that has been made on behalf of the poor.

I would like to contrast what my friend here from Haldimand–Norfolk is doing versus what the government is doing. I think he deserves special commendation because, to be quite blunt, I didn't think I'd ever see a time in my life when a Conservative would be standing here with such a progressive bill.

Mr. Frank Klees: Oh, come on.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no, I'm being honest. I didn't think I'd see it, but I'm seeing it, and I commend him for that. I commend him for that because it has been a real revelation to me that it shows no party boundaries.

I contrast this with what I think the government is or is not doing on this same file. I understand that Gail Nyberg will be presenting a report to the government and that the government is waiting with bated breath to the end of the

month to receive that report and then may or may not implement some of the changes that she is recommending. Since I have known Gail Nyberg for the past 25 years since she is my neighbour, my friend and a very proud East Yorker, I am trusting of her, through my conversations, that she will be making the kind of recommendations that are contained in my colleague Mr. Barrett, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk's, bill here today.

I contrast that with what the Liberals have done in government. I know these are hard economic times, but they weren't until about a year ago. I contrast that with the insistence of this government to continue the clawback of child welfare payments that are given by the federal government to the poorest of the poor.

The monies are given to poor families. If your poor family has a modest job, earning minimum wage, you get to keep that money. But if your poor family is disabled, if they're on Ontarians with disability, that money is clawed back. I have stood so many times in this Legislature to ask why such an injustice can continue, and I have never heard a satisfactory response from a single member of the government in the last six years.

I've asked the same questions about the assets, which this bill is doing something about. A person can only have \$5,000 worth of assets before they can apply to be on ODSP or Ontario Works—\$5,000. You have to literally put yourself into penury before you are eligible to start getting money. And because you have so few assets, the probability or the possibility of you getting out of welfare and out of that vicious cycle is next to nil when and if your circumstances improve. I am pleased to see that my friend is recommending that this go to \$12,000, which is a much more reasonable limit.

1410

I look at the clawback to the disabled, which continues to trouble me enormously, and his bill deals with this as well. A person who is disabled, whom the government agrees is incapable of maintaining full-time work, is subject to a maximum of a little over \$12,000 a year on which to subsist. I don't say “live.” I'm not using that word. I'm using the word “subsist,” because it is a subsistence amount of money they are given: \$12,000. If they have the temerity, the unmitigated gall to go out there and find a part-time job sweeping floors, working in McDonald's, picking up an hour or two of babysitting or whatever else it is, this government has chosen to claw back half of every dollar they earn.

So you can imagine that a young man or a young woman who is born with Down syndrome—you can imagine that they have goals and needs and wants and to be with their friends and family. They want to go to movie theatres, they want to enjoy life, and they are subject to \$12,000 a year. That's all they're going to get. So if they get a part-time job, if they go to McDonald's—and I'm using them as a prime example of a corporation that is enlightened on this issue, that will hire the disabled to do work—the government takes back half of it from them, half of it every month, so that in their entire

lives, they can never get up to the level of poverty, which is about \$21,000 in Ontario. They can never get out of poverty because they had the misfortune of being born with Down syndrome or some other disease that makes it impossible for them to work.

My friend's bill will eliminate that. It will allow them to earn between \$700 as individuals or \$1,000 if there is a couple per month and keep that money without having it clawed back. That will do an amazing thing, \$700 a month. I have said that, over a year, it should be around \$8,000. The difference between the \$12,000 they get and the \$8,000 I would allow them to earn and keep—my friend is expressing \$8,400, so he's one-upped me a little—brings those people to \$20,000 a year, which is the poverty level, so that being born with Down's syndrome or some other disease is not a lifetime sentence to being incredibly and always in poverty.

I commend him for putting this forward, because this is the first opportunity, if this government listens to this—and I've been asking for it for six years, and I join my friend in asking for it today. Give people an opportunity to escape poverty. It is not their fault the way they were born. It is not their fault if they were in an industrial accident. It is not their fault if they got a disease which is not curable and renders it impossible for them to work full-time. It is our responsibility to ensure that they have a legitimate and good life that is not at subsistence level. This bill will do that.

He's talking about other things as well that he wants to do, but I am particularly incensed, because he did mention Nancy Vander Plaats, who is up there in the audience. This government is the same government that is taking those poor people who require a special diet allowance before the Human Rights Commission.

I was down there the other day to get a copy of the government affidavit in support of their action against the poor—this very government, the very action—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Oh, they're waving me off as if this isn't important, their very action to get rid of the special diet. Do you see this? I hope you saw that, Nancy. They're waving me off as if it's not important, getting rid of the special diet allowance because it's costing the government too much money—because those people are probably abusing the system in some kind of way because they require nutritious food, and because the doctors who advocate on their behalf are probably fiddling the system. That's what this government is attempting to do.

I have to tell you, I find what they're doing reprehensible. I commend my friend that he is not getting caught in this very trap.

What he's asking for is reasonable—I've only got four minutes. He is asking that we raise the asset limit to \$12,000, or \$20,000 for a couple. It makes sense to me that someone doesn't have to fall so far and so deep into poverty that there is no hope of getting out simply because they have come to the government for assistance. This is not a lot of money. This is subsistence money for one year—\$12,000. This is poverty money for one year

at \$20,000, but that's for a couple. This is not a lot of money and it is not a lot of assets. It's the ownership of a 10-year-old beat-up car and a television that's probably eight or 10 years old and a few other minor assets like your clothes. That's all that this involves. I don't think we can ask people to do with less than that.

They are asking that child support not be included when it comes to determining the amount of money that those people get when they are eligible for welfare, and the 50% reduction is therefore eliminated. It allows for \$700 to \$1,000 of retained income. I've talked about that, and to me this is probably the single most important thing that is being put forward here: to give those who are truly disabled, to give those who are truly wanting to work and capable of doing minor forms of work, to keep the monies that they get, whether it be from a sheltered workshop, which is clawed back; whether it be from working in McDonald's sweeping a floor a few hours a week, which is clawed back; whether it is babysitting your neighbour's kids, which is clawed back; and to keep that to allow a modicum of humanity, of ability to maybe have some of life's small, little pleasures—going to a movie once every couple of months; having a meal out, even if it's only at McDonald's or Swiss Chalet, once or twice a year; going to a birthday party—just a modicum of human things.

He is also suggesting something else which I think is very important in terms of our tax structure. For those enlightened companies that want to hire the disabled, those that want to hire people who are on income support, it gives them a tax incentive to do so—this is an important thing—so that a company that is enlightened and wants to help the disabled, wants to help someone who is in need of government support—it gives them the incentive to go out there, to hire them and to understand the difficulties often associated, for a little while at least, in hiring someone with a disability or a severe disability that generally would render them incapable of work; to make that possibility, to make that a reality so that they can hire them, so that they can do the work, so that the company can say, "I'm not making any money off this. For me, at least in the short term, this is not the best employee I could hire," but that there is an incentive and an understanding that we as a society have that obligation to the disabled to look after them, to work with them, to give them an opportunity, to give them a sense of purpose.

I support what he is doing here today. I support with all my heart the initiative that he has taken. I thank him for what I see as a sea change perhaps; I hope it's the beginning of a sea change in this Legislature. And I hope that what he has said here today from the opposition bench, from the Progressive Conservative Party, is mirrored by what the government intends to do when Gail Nyberg comes forward with her report. You have an obligation to be every bit as good as what he's saying, or better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to join in the debate this afternoon in respect to Bill 23, brought forward by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. Both the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and myself and the member from Beaches–East York have had the opportunity to serve on the standing committee on finance over a period of time, and we certainly have had the opportunity to hear deputations at various times in regard to what the needs are.

Let me start by saying that I'm pleased to see the bill come forward. The member was kind enough to share it with me a week or so ago, so that I could look at it. I was there with him when the deputants, the witnesses, were before us. At the time, when he brought forward the recommendation, and through the discussion of that committee as he referenced, it was referred to the social assistance review committee, and I look forward, as the member for Beaches–East York said, to their report and recommendations, generally.

1420

I also want to say, in similar fashion to the member from Beaches–East York, that I wasn't here in the 1990s. I see some my friends opposite in the Conservative Party who also weren't in this place, and probably those who were here were not necessarily part of the decision-making directly, at that point in time, in regard to what they did to social assistance support payments.

I'm hopeful and optimistic that this is not only a private members' bill but may be reflective of some different kind of thinking that existed at that time, and maybe broader thinking in that caucus and in their leadership, about how they want to, and how we in this place should respond to, those who find themselves either with disabilities or in need of social assistance. I'm hoping that is all part of the thinking that is going on.

I want to say that I support this bill. I support the broad principle of the bill, whether or not the specific numbers are right, in doing the necessary things to ensure that for those who need assistance, either long-term or in the shorter term, there are vehicles and mechanisms that provide a couple of things: one, support for an adequate living style that can't always be fully supported in the way we would like through direct government assistance, but equally, provide them with what I'll call financial dignity, which goes with the kind of personal dignity that people need. In our economy, in our culture, in our lives, we need to have some level of financial dignity, and a bill of this nature would assist in achieving that.

I am cognizant of the time—we have a number of speakers and limited time available to us—but I do want to briefly reference some of the things we have been doing over time, in essence, to address the issue of poverty, and this is certainly part of that.

I think we need to reflect on the fact that since taking office we have increased social assistance rates by some 12%, basically over almost each budget year. I think there was one that was missed, but there has been an annual increase that has raised social assistance rates by some 12% during that period of time.

Equally, and probably more important for many, particularly for children and their families, was the introduction of the Ontario child benefit. The Ontario child benefit is now providing some \$1,100 annually per child for lower-income families. So we are taking, and have been taking, significant initiatives on the poverty front, in a whole variety of areas to support those in need.

Coming back to the bill, I think the bill is important; I think the principle is important. I'm anxious, as well, to see the report by the social assistance review committee. I was pleased to see the member bring it forward, and I know that members on the committee, at least in our caucus, which I get the opportunity to lead as parliamentary assistant, were pleased to have the discussion and to offer support to the recommendation the member brought forward at that point in time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm very pleased to join in the debate today and speak in favour of Bill 23, introduced by my colleague the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, which would allow individuals who receive Ontario disability support program payments to keep more of their earnings and retain more of their assets. My colleague has recognized that life can be difficult for people with a disability. They do not choose their disability, and they certainly do not choose to be unable to work full-time.

Under our current social assistance system, individuals are being penalized for working. Being part of the working world provides many people with a sense of dignity and belonging. By allowing someone to work part-time while receiving assistance, we are helping to build confidence, resumé's and, ultimately, the economy.

The Ontario Disability Support Program Act was introduced in 1998 by a Progressive Conservative government that recognized that persons with a disability have unique needs that were not being met through the general social assistance program. When John Baird served as Minister of Community and Social Services and minister responsible for children, he ensured that individuals with a disability were treated with dignity and respect. From John Baird in 1998 to Toby Barrett today, the Progressive Conservative Party understands that persons with a disability should be treated with the same dignity and respect that you and I expect to be treated with.

Asset levels for those receiving ODSP were set with this legislation in 1998 and have gone untouched in 12 years. It is simply not right to tell individuals with a disability that they are not allowed to have assets exceeding \$5,000. Bill 23 would ensure that individuals who qualify for ODSP could have assets of \$12,000, as compared to the current limit of \$5,000.

Today is the time for change. My colleague has recognized an opportunity to assist persons with a disability. By supporting Bill 23, we can make a difference for many in our province. Not only does Bill 23 provide a much-needed increase to the income threshold for persons with a disability, but it also provides incentives

for employers who hire someone with a disability. Our current system is a disincentive for those on ODSP to go out and work and contribute to their family's well-being. We have a chance to assist persons in the disability community to expand their job skills and contribute to their community and the economy of our province. We have a chance to take another step forward in eliminating the stigma that can occur to individuals with a disability.

In the short time since this bill was introduced and up to today, I've been receiving emails of support for this bill from across the province.

Community Living Ontario and the ODSP Action Coalition have been long-time supporters to change the eligibility thresholds for ODSP recipients. Community Living Ontario said in support of this bill, "This matter is one of great importance to our organization and its members. It is widely acknowledged that the system that is currently in place acts as a disincentive to work. We know that people want to work real jobs for real pay," and be able to keep that pay. "The current system hinders rather than helps people to build their own capacity to escape poverty."

Premier McGuinty was quoted in a Toronto Star article entitled "Punished for Working Too Diligently" on this very issue as saying, "Unwittingly, we have developed a policy that stomps you into the ground." The Premier has recognized that this is a problem, and when we see problems as legislators, we have a responsibility to correct them. I urge all members of this House to support Bill 23. It is important for families, for communities, for our economy and, most importantly, for individuals with a disability.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to join in the debate on Bill 23, brought forth by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk. Recognizing the scope of a private member's bill, one can point out some of the areas in which it may be incomplete or indeed may overlap some of the government's initiatives. I do commend the member for the initiative, although it doesn't address some of the needs for better training or better jobs, access to affordable housing, health care or quality education: some of those other things that we need to do to advance the broader poverty issue in a more complete way. Again, its scope is restricted by the fact that it is a private member's bill.

Among the things that our government has done has been to launch a major anti-poverty initiative, which is called the Ontario poverty reduction strategy. It's focused on addressing just about all of the determinants of poverty reduction. Again, the member's bill is restricted in its scope, because it is a private member's bill. But some of the things that the government has done would include uploading costs from municipalities that previously had to be borne by individuals on their property tax bill, which makes a big difference; in fact, that totals up to \$1.5 billion by 2018. We're providing \$1,100 annually per child through the Ontario child benefit, which is an 83% increase compared to 2008; creating a new employ-

ment transition benefit; and, I think, most importantly for people who are on social assistance, extending drug, dental and vision care benefits. Some things that one of my colleagues addressed are, in fact, exempted: things like the value of your home, your RDSPs and your RESPs. You can have those assets; they're not held against you. We've ended the deduction of the national child benefit supplement in flowing through the federal working income tax benefit to all Ontarians who are receiving social assistance.

There are a number of things that the government has done that are complementary to this bill. I do commend the member for having brought it forward. I thank you very much for the time to add my comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1430

Mr. Glen R. Murray: First, I want to commend the member on bringing this bill forward. I think it's an excellent piece of work and that it deserves the support of the House. Though I don't share all of the comments that the member from Beaches-East York said, I think the thrust of what he was saying was also quite pertinent. To my colleagues in government, I obviously share their concerns.

One member here accused me of being an interloper and not understanding poverty. I've always believed that this is about personal responsibility and the way that we should be respectful of each other as members, because we don't know a lot about each other's lives. Some may be surprised by this honourable member's bill because, as the member from Beaches-East York put out, it was, for some folks, a surprising source for this kind of initiative.

We have lots to do, and I think we have to take personal responsibility in our lives and with our families for the care of people who are less able. I spent most of my life, until I got older and got back into politics, as a foster parent. I fostered and adopted children who were known as level 5, who are the highest-needs kinds of kids, who are the hardest to place. I spent about 20 years of my life working until 3 o'clock in the morning on streets with children as young as 11, 12, 13 and 14, who sold their bodies in exchange for money because they were beaten and raped at home.

Our world is, sadly, filled with children and families in crisis, and when adults are in crisis, the collateral damage is the future of those children: kids with fetal alcohol syndrome, children who end up on the street with HIV. The cost to the health care system, but more importantly the total devastation of their lives, is the price of denying someone their productive potential and their quality of life. To me, this is the cruellest and most unimaginable thing we can do.

We can't simply rely on the state. I'm a practising Christian and very proud of that. One of my pastors always points out to me that if 5% of children of Christians adopted and fostered children in our cities, we wouldn't have any kids without homes; we wouldn't have any of the kids with disabilities without a safe place to call home at the end of the day.

While I believe in these institutional supports—and one of the reasons I agree with the honourable member's motion is because it empowers people; it gives them more capacity in their lives. It's a hand up, not a handout. I think the values he's expressing are honourable ones, and I'm glad to hear it. I will more than just vote for this today; I would be happy to work with the honourable member to try to realize this legislation.

The government has taken a lot of criticism. On these occasions, this becomes—as some members have done—an attack to attack everything the government has done.

I was chair of a planning committee in another city, and I negotiated with Benoît Bouchard and the provincial government the uploading of social services to the province and qualification under the old Canada assistance program. All of the municipalities got funding on social services to qualify under CAP. It was the biggest increase, I think, ever in social assistance rates.

One of the reasons I came here is that I'm hoping—because I don't plan on spending my life here; I think about two elections or 10 years is enough here, quite frankly; this is public service, not a career for me—when I leave here, we're hopefully one day in a situation where we have a negative income tax, where we actually have a floor that we put under, where we reward people for working and make the value of a dollar earned more important than a dollar handed out. The money that we hand out to people who can't work is critically precious. There are too many people who will just simply never be able to work, but people who can be marginally employed—three times, when I have been in significant hiring positions, I hired people who were in wheelchairs or had disabilities, and I watched personally how it changed their lives, restoring their dignity. Again, this is it.

But I want to talk about the government's record here a bit because I think it is fairly positive. There are almost 100,000 low-income people who used to have to pay income tax whom we're taking off the income tax rolls. That means that some of our lowest-income workers are now keeping more of their money, and that's really important.

I think there's a commitment in this government to work toward that. We have raised the minimum wage, which was \$6.85, to \$10.25, and we're continuing to do that.

The child tax credits and packages of advantages—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank my colleague the member for Haldimand-Norfolk for bringing this bill forward for consideration by this Legislature.

I want to say at the outset that I will, of course, be supporting this proposed legislation, because I believe that it just makes good, common sense. I think that for us in this House to send a signal that we want to encourage people with disabilities to become actively engaged, to pursue a career, is sending the right signal.

I think the existing policy has to be so incredibly disheartening for individuals who are already dealing

with the challenges of a disability. People go to the effort of finding a job, or retraining, and getting into a position of earning an income and becoming self-sufficient—because that ultimately is the objective—and then for government, at the end of the week, to say, “No, by the way, we're going to claw back” what, quite frankly, is a bare existence, in any event.

So for Mr. Barrett to come forward and say to the government that it's time we encourage people to pursue careers, to become self-sufficient, is the right thing to do. Whether it's with regard to being allowed to keep more of their income—the first \$700, as is proposed—and we can talk about whether it should be \$700 or \$1,000. I'm willing to have that discussion, and I know that my colleague is as well. The reason I say that is because all members have been asked recently to go through an exercise called Do the Math. We were challenged to go through a monthly budget, and that had to do with basically the Ontario Works budget that people are on—but I think there's an application here. I tell you, I went through that process. I looked at what it costs to live for a period of a month on the benefits that are being offered to people, whether it's social assistance or the Ontario disability support plan.

I think that we, too, have to look at what it costs for someone to live in dignity in this province. When you consider what it costs for basic rent; for food; for the increased costs we talk about in this Legislature every day, in terms of the increased costs of electricity and natural gas, the HST—there isn't a person on social assistance who is going to be exempt from the HST or the additional cost of electricity. We have a responsibility to ensure that people who are not able to look after themselves can in fact live with dignity. This is a bill that I believe goes the distance to at least ensuring that people are encouraged to be self-sufficient.

I want to wrap up my comments because I want to leave some time for my colleague Mr. Miller as well.

I want to close with a letter that was written to me. I believe it goes to the heart of the principle of this bill. I quote as follows:

“My son has Down syndrome and has recently turned 18. He is now qualified for ODSP. That sounds wonderful to be able to get some support, because other funding for” my son “as a child has been discontinued. When he turns 18 I no longer receive assistance for children with severe disabilities, nor will I get the child tax credit for children with disabilities.

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“I was, however, disappointed when I learned that because I am a single parent” my son's “ODSP will be clawed back by any child support I receive from his” father.

“My argument is that this arrangement was made so that I could afford to provide a home and caregiving” for my son. That is the support arrangement. “The burden of supporting” my son “will be the responsibility of both his parents. Although ODSP is government social assistance, the burden of housing with attendant care has remained

our problem, one we share with other parents of developmentally delayed and autistic children. There is presently a waiting list for residential services. I am 55 years old and I shudder to know that there are almost 1,500 aging parents, 80% over 70 years old waiting for residential support who may suddenly be unable to support their child. While we can," this woman and her son's father "will continue to provide a home for Michael." This is a challenge for many.

"In a family situation where both parents are living with the ODSP recipient, the parents' income is not disclosed. It has no bearing on the income support by ODSP. Why then would a cheque payable to me be part of" my son's "income?" This bill resolves that issue.

I want to thank my colleague for bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: In the brief time that I have left, I just wanted to really commend the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for bringing this Bill 23 forward. He and I were on the pre-budget hearings together this January and February, travelling around the province. I know that he has, for a number of years, participated in the pre-budget consultations. When groups would come before the committee and make suggestions about allowing people on ODSP to work, earn and keep more of their money, we would always be supportive of that. I'm very pleased that he has brought forward this bill. He has addressed a number of different issues.

I just feel that a person doesn't choose to have a disability, and they shouldn't be impoverished because they have a disability. If they are able to work, then they should be encouraged to do that and they should be rewarded by being able to keep more of that income and have more assets. I note that the bill allows a modest increase in assets—I think it's up to \$12,000. That's an improvement, so I'm certainly supportive of that.

As was mentioned by the former member, he was talking about the child support, the fact that that would not lower the amount of your ODSP payment. I'm fully supportive of that as well.

I'm very pleased that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk brought this bill forward, and I will be fully supportive of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Haldimand–Norfolk, Mr. Barrett, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Toby Barrett: A valuable debate: After 15 years in this House, I am quite heartened by the input. I appreciate that.

The member for Beaches–East York: You and I have sat side by side on finance for a number of years. You know the numbers. There may be merit in returning to this debate, perhaps half a day of hearings on finance. Also, another fellow member, the member for Pickering–Scarborough East, the parliamentary assistant to finance: It may merit half a day of hearings just to work out some of the numbers. This is not my bill, by the way; this is

our bill. So many people have provided input, but there would be more work to be done if this was going to go forward.

Our social services critic, the member from Dufferin–Caledon: Thank you for the support, thank you for that history and thank you for the encouragement as I worked through this over the winter.

The member for Mississauga–Streetsville: I do agree; this legislation does not go far enough, recognizing that it is a private member's bill. Again, we rely on others to flesh some of this out.

The member for Toronto Centre: I appreciate the experience that was brought to this debate as a foster parent of children, as the member described, with very high needs. I was somewhat bemused: I heard an expression from the member that I don't seem to use anymore, the concept of providing a hand up rather than a handout. I never thought of it that way in this legislation, but that's partly what this is.

My colleague the member for Newmarket–Aurora is an eloquent speaker. I was so impressed with the email he read that explained, in a very fulsome way, the issue with people losing child support payments.

I appreciate the fellow to my right who sits on the finance committee, the member for Parry Sound, and his wise input as our critic for finance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The time for this ballot item has expired. For those in the galleries and those watching at home, we'll vote on Mr. Barrett's ballot item in about 100 minutes.

SEPARATION DISTANCES
FOR NATURAL GAS
POWER PLANTS ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT
DE DISTANCES DE SÉPARATION
POUR LES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
AU GAZ NATUREL

Mr. Flynn moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to establish separation distances for natural gas power plants / Projet de loi 8, Loi établissant des distances de séparation pour les centrales électriques au gaz naturel.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member Mr. Flynn has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to be able to rise in the Legislature today. I want to thank, first, all members of the Oakville public who have joined us here at Queen's Park today and made that drive down the QEW. Wait till you see the drive home. It's a little different than the drive down here, usually.

I also want to thank my colleagues who have assisted me in the preparation of this bill on all sides of the House. I want to thank the organizers from C4CA, who have done so much to bring this to the attention of both myself, members of council, members of the provincial Legislature, and members of the federal government as

well, and all those community leaders who have stepped forward on this issue, because it's an issue that I don't think my community ever expected to face. It came as a bit of a shock when an announcement was made in our community. The people who have responded really well—and I'd like to introduce them to the House: Rob Burton, mayor of Oakville, who's joined us in the east members' gallery; and a colleague of mine for 18 years on Oakville town council, representing the people of the ward and the riding where I'm from in Oakville, ward 1, Councillor Ralph Robinson. Ralph is with us as well.

The bill that's before us today, if passed, would do something very simple. It would prohibit the construction of a natural gas power plant unless that facility was located a minimum of 1,500 metres away from any land that is zoned for residential use, any land on which an educational facility is located, a day nursery or a health care facility. The proposed bill is intended, though, to allow for the construction of natural gas power plants in safe locations in communities, where they should be.

We've moved ahead, I think, in this province as we're looking at power supply and demand, and we've decided that gas-fired power plants will play a role in the provision of electricity. What we've found as we moved forward, however, is that the siting of those plants is sometimes not in the best interest of the people in that community.

Now, some people have claimed that this plant is a plant for Oakville, that somehow, because Oakville uses electricity, it should have a plant located very close to it. Oakville's demand is about 90 megawatts. This plant, members should know, is close to 1,000 megawatts. That's larger than most nuclear reactors. That's larger than any nuclear reactor in the province of Ontario, that I'm aware of. The sad fact of the matter is that currently, surprisingly, Ontario does not have any legislation that mandates the separation distances for natural gas power plants from those sensitive uses I've just outlined.

We were selected, as a result of a process that I can't say I'm entirely proud of, for the location of a 945-megawatt natural gas power plant, and that plant currently in the province of Ontario would be allowed to be built on a site where you couldn't put a three-megawatt wind turbine. There's something absurd about that. It's something that I think all members of the House should be concerned about and something that we should be able to do something about.

The plant is 320 metres from the closest school, it's 400 metres from homes, it's 60 metres to the closest business, and it's seven metres from one of the busiest railroad corridors in all of North America. The recent derailment in Pickering—those trains came off the track about 200 feet. This application had to go to the committee of adjustment to allow it to be located 7.5 metres away from the railroad tracks. Those trains would have gone through this building.

1450

You also look at the Middletown explosion, the explosion that happened down in Connecticut. If that had happened in this area, it would have been tragic.

You also look at an example we're hearing about today from Shreveport, Louisiana, where the fire chief is petitioning his council to move the fire department because a natural gas power plant is located next to the fire station. If there was an accident at the gas plant, it would blow up the fire department. The fire department wouldn't be able to respond to that. That simply makes no sense. He is urging us to do something about this.

There are a number of people who are urging us by quotes to do something about this. I want to read something from the mayor of Middletown, Connecticut. He says, "Having observed the extensive review process required by the state of Connecticut, the federal government as well as our own local regulatory commissions, I would like to encourage you to continue to insist on a careful, transparent and objective evaluation of all of the issues involved in the siting of electric power generating plants." This is the line I want everyone to pay attention to: "We were fortunate in that the Kleen plant is located in a very remote and sparsely populated area of Middletown."

Christine Magee—you've all heard her on the radio, the president of Sleep Country Canada—says, "The proposed bill identifies a gap in current regulations ... this is a common-sense measure worthy of all-party support"—somebody from our business community.

Dr. Thomas Stewart, director of critical care medicine, just down the street here, at Mount Sinai Hospital, University Health Network: "Due to these detrimental health effects, I am supportive of proposed legislation that mandates a 1,500-metre separation distance between ... gas power plants and residential communities."

Former president of Microsoft Canada, Frank Clegg: "Mr. Flynn's bill seeks to correct this problem by mandating a 1,500-metre buffer between gas-fired power plants and the communities they serve"—and what else I want every other member of this House to pay attention to—"so every community in Ontario will be protected."

Jose Etcheverry from the faculty of environmental studies up at York University: "MPP Kevin Flynn's private member bill provides Ontario with a unique opportunity to re-evaluate the suitability of large-scale polluting plants...."

Somebody everybody knows: Mike "Pinball" Clemons, the Toronto Argos' executive now and a former star player. He says, "When I have a power plant that is going to be located 300 metres from a school ... I want to say to my government that I cheer for you and I want you to make" good "decisions ... 300 metres from a school doesn't seem to be" a good decision.

Pierre Morrisette, owner of the Weather Network: "I think this approach meets the health and safety needs of communities and the energy needs of Ontario."

I could go on and on. We've got a number of people from the business community, the environmental community, the legal community who have stepped forward to say that we need to do something about this, and we have the opportunity to do something about this today.

PM_{2.5} is a health concern in my community. It has been linked in numerous medical studies to decreased

lung function, development of chronic bronchitis and cardiovascular events, such as heart attacks and strokes.

We've used a precautionary principle in establishing this 1,500-metre zone. We've looked at examples from around the world, we've looked at other jurisdictions, and we've decided that this is a good starting point. This is a starting point for a debate on establishing standards.

I want to tell you that this can happen anywhere in the province of Ontario. You could have a plant in your riding tomorrow, Speaker. Any member of this House could have a plant in their riding, this close to homes, and even closer.

There's a lack of transparency with the process as it stands today, and, simply put, site selection is not a priority. There are alternatives to this that I will outline at a future time, but certainly, we don't have to build this plant in this location.

What this will do—the import of this bill—is it will not allow for the construction of a gas-fired power plant on the Lakeview site within the community of Clarkson, nor on the Ford lands in Oakville, or on any other unsafe or unsuitable site in the province of Ontario that's within 1,500 metres of sensitive land uses.

Today, ethics are very, very important in business. What we ask business to do is ask: Is the action consistent with the company's basic duties? In this regard, it probably is. TransCanada builds power plants. Does it respect the rights and other legitimate claims of the affected parties? In this case, it doesn't. Does it reflect the best practice? This is not the best technology, and it's not the best practice.

Is it compatible with the company's own deeply held commitments? Only TransCanada and Ford can answer that, but I'll tell you what TransCanada's values are. They say, "We demonstrate high ethical standards in everything we do. We treat each other, our customers, governments and other stakeholders with honesty and respect." What I'm saying in this House is that if they are going to adhere to those ethics, they need to not build this plant in Oakville; it's that simple. If you're going to say that, you have to do that.

The other question asked from an ethical objective is, would I be comfortable if this action were described on the front page of a newspaper? It has been described on the front page of many newspapers. I don't think TransCanada is very comfortable, nor is Ford. Would I be comfortable if everyone in a similar situation did this? If this happened all over Ontario, it would be a disaster in the making. And is this how I'd like my leadership to be remembered? Ford and TransCanada need to answer those questions.

What we need to do today is establish the ground rules. When companies are going to partner with us in the generation of electricity, be it through any means—solar, wind turbines, nuclear—we need to have clear standards. What we don't have currently in place for gas generating plants is a separation distance; we don't have a buffer zone. We do for other uses, but for some reason we don't for natural-gas-fired power plants. I think it's time for us

to step up. It's the opportunity for Ontario to be a leader in safe energy.

I ask for the support of all members of the House today. I ask them to imagine, were this plant located 300 yards from their children's school, if they would want it there. I ask them to—

Mr. Michael Prue: Should have thought of that in August.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Michael Prue. Nice comment.

I ask you, if this was to be located 300 yards or less from a nursery school, would that be something you would make a joke about? Would that be something you would laugh about? It's very, very serious to my community. It's something that means a lot to my community.

Previous governments have tried to come to grips with the provision of energy in the province of Ontario, and we've all made various strides and advances. This is the time to make another advance. I ask for the support of all members of the House, so that we can continue to provide clean electricity to people in the province of Ontario and do it in a safe manner.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

First of all, I remind honourable members to refer to each other by their riding names. Secondly, members of the gallery, while we really appreciate your coming to Queen's Park today, we do not allow participation in the debate, and unfortunately that includes clapping.

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Can I ask for unanimous consent to allow the gallery to applaud?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I suppose you can do that. Do we have unanimous consent? I hear a no.

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to start by thanking the gallery. There are well over 300 people here from Oakville, which I think speaks seriously to how emotional and how important this issue is to the people of Oakville. It speaks volumes when 300 people take a day out of their lives to come down to Queen's Park to let the government know how seriously they feel about this.

As the member for Oakville mentioned, wait until the drive home. It's that drive home as well as the morning drive in rush hour that put the Oakville-Clarkson airshed under a lot of stress. It is one of the most stressed airsheds in Ontario; indeed in Canada, for that matter. That is not just a statistic that sits on paper. Oakville and people within the Clarkson airshed and their children under the age of 19 have the highest incidence of respiratory diseases in Canada, and that's the human element of a stressed airshed. When we talk about a stressed airshed, that's one thing. The facts supplement that and back that up, but the real effect of that is the respiratory diseases that we see in our children. Also, anybody who is in their senior years is also affected with breathing issues.

1500

This proposed plant is of 900 megawatts. That's a huge plant. If you've seen the plant on the 401, just west

of Trafalgar Road in Halton Hills, that plant is just over 600 megawatts. The Oakville plant will be a third larger than that. It will sit on 13.5 acres—I think Kevin referred to this—whereas the Halton Hills plant sits on 79 acres. It's a very, very small piece of land that the Oakville plant is proposed to sit on, and it is just that much closer to its neighbours. When this was proposed, I'm just wondering who in the government, in the bureaucracy or in the power generators would have thought that this would be a good idea.

As far as safety is concerned, again, it has been mentioned that there are 1,100 homes, 16 schools and many seniors' residences and child cares all within the limits of less than what is proposed under Bill 8. I wonder who in the decision-making process would have thought that this was a good idea.

This plant is being built because we need the electricity, or so we're told. When this plant was planned back in 2004-05, the peak demand for the province of Ontario was around 27,000 megawatts. That was on a day in July when all the air conditioners in the province were turned on. The province was operating at a fairly high level of economic activity. Over 27,000 megawatts were used on that day in July 2005. Since that time, every year the peak demand for that year has declined. That decline continued until 2009, when the peak demand was 22,000 megawatts, some 5,000 megawatts less than we used in 2005.

Certainly we're in a recession—or we have been in a recession; we're beginning to come out of that recession. Hopefully, as we come out of that recession, our electrical demands will rise again with the increasing economy. However, there has been a significant restructuring in the economy in Ontario, and that economy may not see the same demand for electricity in the future that we have seen in the past.

I've been in a lot of manufacturing facilities in my time, and the 100-horsepower electric motors that used to draw tremendous amounts of power are rapidly becoming a thing of the past. We're seeing much smaller engines and much more efficient equipment producing the same amount of products.

Whether or not we're ever going to climb back to those areas, and given that we already have a 600-megawatt plant in Halton, I seriously question whether this plant is needed now or indeed will be needed any time in the near future. If it is needed in the future, certainly there can be a location found that would be much safer, much larger and much more conducive to its operation than the place they have selected for this on the Ford lands, on such a small piece of property. I certainly remain to be convinced that we need this plant at all.

The only problem I have with this bill is that in subsection 2(3) it says this section “does not apply to a person who constructs, installs or expands a natural gas power plant if, on a day before the day this act comes into force, all of the approvals, permits and other instruments that are required under any act to construct, install or expand the natural gas power plant have been obtained.”

It is on the website of TransCanada. It is suggested that they will have their ducks in a row, they'll have their instruments approved, by the end of summer or early fall of this year. That means that this bill will have to pass third reading prior to June 3, when this House rises for its summer recess. In passing this bill in that time frame, it would go a long way to protect the people of Oakville, particularly the people who live in that precise area so close to this plant. That's why I will be supporting this bill, as will the members of the PC caucus. It's for the safety, the lifestyles and the health of the people of Oakville and the people of Ontario. All the people of Ontario deserve to have that known.

Further, after this vote is taken in a little less than an hour and a half, I will ask for unanimous consent again and move that we move directly to third reading of this bill so that it will be in a position to avoid going to committee and will come back to this House in the immediate future for third reading to ensure that it gets past the legislative hurdles of being passed in this House by June 3.

I look forward to the passing of this bill. I look forward to this government supporting the passing of this bill and bringing health and safety back to Ontario and, indeed, to the residents of Oakville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I want to rise and I want everyone in the whole room to understand from the beginning that I will be voting yes to this bill. But I also want you to understand that over the next 12 minutes, I'm going to explain to all of you why you are here today, and why you ought not to have been here in the first place.

I've read this bill throughout; I've read it many times. I've also read all of the submissions that have been put forward by the people of Oakville. I have read what they have to say. I have read the comments that they have made. I think you have made very relevant and very real comments.

I've looked at the supporters who have signed on to the bill and the quotes that are there. There is a US mayor, there are doctors and medical people, there are businesspeople, there are academics, and there are sports heroes. There are no municipal politicians, although I am thankful that there are some in the audience here today. The reason there are no municipal politicians is that this Legislature took away the rights of the people of Oakville and the rights of the politicians of the town of Oakville to deal with this in the first place. That day was August 30, 2006, on a motion from the member from Oakville. That was motion number 94, dealing with section 23 of the Municipal Act, which took away every single right that every single citizen and every single municipality in this province had to question whether or not a plant like this was sited in their municipality. Do you all know that? The reason you are here today is because your member who was standing up for you today, and rightly so, did not stand up for you in August 2006. I have the 18-page transcript, and I invite anybody who wants it—I'll be in

room 154 when this is over—to come down and pick it up and see what was said on that day: the warnings that were given by the lawyers to the member from Oakville and his Liberal colleagues; the warnings that were given by the Progressive Conservatives who were there, my colleagues Ms. MacLeod and Mr. Hardeman; and the warnings that were given by me of what was eventually going to happen. On that day, the issue wasn't about Oakville. No, the issue on that day was what was going to happen to the gas-fired power plant in the city of Toronto, in the port lands. I was accused by the member from Oakville of being "silly," of being "alarmist," of saying that things were going to happen in other municipalities down the road that he wasn't going to like.

The reality is that today this has all happened to you. This is what has happened to you because this government determined on that date in 2006 that you would never again have the opportunity through your elected officials municipally, or your right as citizens, to go before the Ontario Municipal Board to challenge an abomination like this.

1510

So you are here today hoping that this Legislature will do something that is very rare, and that is to pass a private member's bill: first, second and third readings; go through committee and have it passed; and have it ordered by the government, which opposes you, and have it passed. This is very, very unlikely. When you lost was in August 2006. I am going to vote for you in the vain hope that we can resurrect that in the future, so that once again the people of Oakville can feel safe.

Just to give you some quotes—I think my colleagues from the Conservative Party later on will quote what they had to say that Mr. Flynn and his colleagues ignored in this House in 2006.

Mr. Prue: "Then perhaps I can ask Mr. Flynn—who was about to answer, saying that he wants the lights to stay on—is this an attempt to stop the city of Toronto from fighting the province on the port lands energy project? Is that what you're doing here?"

Later on, Mr. Flynn answers, "When the need to supply energy to the province of Ontario reaches a certain point, and if an impasse is reached, the government of Ontario would have the authority." That's where he was.

We go on to some more. Mr. Hardeman to the lawyer, Mr. Shachter: "So it is as Mr. Prue suggested, then. If the objection from the city of Toronto presently is that it's improper planning and they're not going to approve the planning for it, this amendment will negate the need for that planning approval."

Mr. Shachter, the lawyer: "That's correct, subject to compliance with the conditions that are contained in the section."

Mr. Flynn heard that.

I went on to say: "You're taking away what you gave them"—that is, the city of Toronto. "You gave them the right for site plan approval, you gave them the right for zoning on projects, and now you are taking it away by virtue of this amendment," to which he agreed.

I went on to say: "This means that not only is there going to be a port lands project in Toronto, but this means that every municipality in Ontario is vulnerable to whatever whim you or future governments have. There can be energy from waste if they don't want it. There can be a nuclear power plant in their downtown if you deem that that's appropriate, if they don't want it."

Mr. Flynn: "That's silly."

Mr. Prue: "They have lost every single ... local control if this motion is passed, and if section 23 is passed.

"What has this got to do with good planning practices? The location of energy projects needs to take into account the compatibility of the surrounding lands; it needs to take into account what the official plans of the municipalities are." Ignored.

I went on to say—I'm just as angry today, and it's four years later—"I don't know what to say except that I am so incredibly angry—I am so incredibly angry. I don't know what you're going to say. You're probably not going to say anything in defence."

Mr. Flynn: "I'm going to say a lot."

Then he went on to say things like—I quote him—"That's absolute tripe." And he went on to say: "We're proposing to extend those undertakings to any other projects around this. Already, Hydro One and OPG have this provision. I don't see a nuclear power plant in the middle of Toronto. They've had this provision for a long, long time. I don't think the alarmist stuff really serves this process at all." He says more: "Any proposed project is not going to be placed willy-nilly. They're still subject to the Environmental Assessment Board," which is what is happening to you.

We go on. Mr. Hardeman, a very smart man: "We thank the member from the government side for explaining the issues and the changes made to the Planning Act, but I think you totally glossed over the fact that for these purposes, for the energy purposes, you have exempted them from the Planning Act, so you've got much more government involvement but no municipal involvement in the energy ones. I think that's really the concern."

The member from Nepean-Carleton said, "I just wanted to add a comment because we're talking about the public process and public input. I have to beg to differ with the government side on this. You'll take it as no surprise that I agree with Mr. Hardeman and Mr. Prue. You're severely inhibiting the public input in the planning process by eliminating the municipality here. You have limited debate on this piece of legislation. The city of Toronto has not seen this amendment. In fact, entire sections of this piece of legislation have been rewritten in the last two days. I'd like to know what consultation you took with the city of Toronto..." etc.

But I think the whole nub—and I've got three minutes left. We had three votes that day on this bill and on the provision that brings you here, in favour of all three motions. Ayes: Brownell—who is here today. Mr. Brownell, you remember this. Ayes: Mr. Brownell from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Ayes: Mr. Flynn

from Oakville. Ayes: Mr. Lalonde from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Ayes: Mr. Rinaldi from Northumberland–Quinte West. Nays: Mr. Hardeman, Ms. MacLeod, Mr. Prue. The Chair: “The motion is carried.” That happened three times—three separate votes.

I was pretty angry that day. I thanked the Chair and I told them I wasn't going support the section. I said the following in my anger, and I was angry. I want you to know, I don't wish this upon you, but I did say it. I said this to Mr. Flynn that day:

“The screams may not be coming because everybody's got their fingers crossed. I know they've got their fingers crossed: ‘Please don't let it be me.’ They're just hoping that of the 450 municipalities, it happens to somebody else. But I will tell you, when it happens, as it has to the city of Toronto and the port lands, there are going to be screams. When it happens, Mr. Rinaldi, in your riding, there are going to be screams. In yours, Mr. Lalonde, in yours, Mr. Flynn, and in yours, Mr. Brownell, there are going to be screams when the municipality has no say whatsoever on the siting of energy plants. People are going to wake up and they're suddenly going to start asking why and how this has happened. We're going to be able to point the finger pretty bluntly, because I know what's going to happen on 23, the same as I just saw happen to the amendment: You're all going to put your hands up,” as they did. “But I want to tell you, if fate is good—and sometimes I love fate—I hope that those energy plants end up in your ridings, and that your municipalities turn around and say, ‘We want to be consulted.’ You are the ones who are going to have to go and tell them, ‘You're not going to be consulted, because I voted that you would never be consulted again.’ That is the reality of what you are doing.”

That is what this member did. What he is asking today, I agree with; I agree that this is an abomination. But the people of Oakville, through their legitimate council, the people of Oakville, in their own right, should have had the ability to go to the Ontario Municipal Board, should have had the ability to appeal, should have had the ability to decide whether or not this was an appropriate site, and you have taken that away from them. Nothing you can do here today is going to ever give them that right back.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I will tell you, Mr. Flynn, you can argue all you want. You might be right today, but you were absolutely wrong, then and you owe every one of them an apology for your past actions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): On Thursday afternoons, we do give a great deal of leeway in terms of style of debate, but I am going to start calling members if you don't speak through the Chair. Secondly, please do not speak directly to the galleries. In the past, that has caused grave disorder in this House.

Further debate?

Mr. David Caplan: Speaker, through you, I'd like to congratulate the member from Oakville on bringing forward this measure. It was a little over a year ago that

the Legislature considered something called the Green Energy Act to attempt to try to make Ontario a leader in the provision of green energy and to support the economic development of what I think the world is describing as an emerging economy. In that bill, the government of Ontario established that there was a minimum boundary distance when you have wind turbines, that there ought to be, for health and safety reasons, a separation between wind turbines and residential neighbourhoods.

1520

The Green Energy Act calls for a 550-metre separation. I must admit that I had been under the assumption that this was consistent with other energy generation in the province of Ontario, and I was quite surprised to learn, when the member from Oakville brought this to my attention, that that was not the case; that in the case of a natural-gas-fired plant, you could be located literally next door to a residential neighbourhood, after this Legislature established a principle that there ought to be a separation, that that was in the public interest, that that was good planning principles.

So I want to congratulate the member from Oakville for bringing forward this measure, because obviously there was an oversight. Obviously, there was a gap. Obviously, there's a need to have consistency in one provision of energy.

I don't think anyone in this Legislature or anyone in this province would dispute that we have growing communities and a growing economy, that we are going to require electricity to fire our homes, support our businesses and support our quality of life, but that it be placed appropriately, that it be in a place where it was not interfering or conflicting with a residential setting. I was surprised that you could be located so close to a school or a hospital.

I think the member from Oakville has quite rightly brought this forward, brought this to the attention of the Legislature. I hope that this measure will be adopted here today, and by the government as it moves through its deliberations on Bill 8—or even contained within its own legislation.

This is about safety. It's about appropriate setbacks and minimizing the safety risks that residents not simply in Oakville but residents in any part of the province of Ontario would ordinarily expect. That's why I am quite in support of the measures contained here.

The member said that this is the beginning of a conversation. I think that's quite right. I don't have the technical know-how to be able to inform or the expertise to be able to extol whether one and a half kilometres is the right distance. Should it be 550 metres? Should it be more than that? Should it be less? I don't know. But it's important that we have this conversation, it's important that we have this debate, and it's important given the fact that this Legislature has already established—through its support for minimum separation distances when it comes to the provision of energy generation.

This ought to be supported, and this member, the member from Oakville, ought to be congratulated for

trying to address a historical oversight and making sure that this is now operative in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 8 introduced by my colleague the member for Oakville. I know that his constituents are concerned about his government's plan to put a peaker plant in Oakville.

My constituents have long been concerned about this government's energy plans in York-Simcoe.

Let me state first that there is a legitimate need, understood by most, for energy in northern York region, and the government is right to recognize and work to meet this need.

Years ago, I wrote to my local councils and chambers to involve them in this necessary process. The government first tried to meet this need by building new power lines from Markham to Newmarket. This failed because of opposition in those communities. Then the government moved to build a peaker plant, holding a bidding process, and finally choosing a site in northern King township.

I note that the member for Oakville wants to ban peaker plants from coming any closer than 1.5 kilometres to a school or a residential area.

Let me inform this House that the peaker plant plan for my riding is a lot closer than 1.5 kilometres from the Holland Marsh District Christian School. The plant is right beside the Holland Marsh itself, the salad bowl of Ontario, and on the very land that you, as a government, thought vital to be included in the greenbelt.

A few short years ago, you deemed this land to be protected from intrusion. Now the government is prepared to sacrifice the principles of its greenbelt law.

So I ask, on behalf of my constituents: How can this Liberal government justify building a natural gas-fired electricity generating plant in the middle of the greenbelt on the edge of the Holland Marsh and within a short distance of a school?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I just wanted to say that this is a very fragile ecoregion of southern Ontario. It's really a contrast of an incredibly beautiful place to live and raise a family, while at the same time it faces the worst impacts of uncontrolled, unbridled sprawl that has been choking this province for so many years. And so, in this respect, I am somewhat aware of the pressures on this fragile Oakville-Trafalgar area.

A number of years ago, many of you here sat in this House and voted against my bill. I can go back to history too. I had a bill called the "protect the Trafalgar moraine bill." But I'm not going to get into vilifying people. I'm going to talk about the fact that this area has incredibly sensitive ecosystems. One of them is the Trafalgar moraine: home to over 400 species, headwaters to a number of creeks and rivers. I tried to bring that sensitivity to the attention of the government at the time,

because basically it was just a western-style free-for-all and sprawl everywhere. But at least by bringing that to the attention of the people here and working together with now-Mayor Rob Burton of Oakville and Allan Elgar and "green Oakville" and Councillor Flynn, we were able to put some really good protections in place through the municipality, and I think they've done some incredibly good things with that added sensitivity. So these sensitive issues are issues that we have to grapple with. Blaming and finger-pointing and vilifying people does not solve it.

By doing what he has done, MPP Flynn—I was going to say "Councillor Flynn"—has essentially sent a very strong message to all of us that we have to do better at protecting sensitive areas when it comes to building power plants, when it comes to building wind turbines, when it comes to building or expanding nuclear power plants. We have to sensitize the decision-makers. It's not every MPP who makes these final decisions. It sends a strong message to our government and to the Ontario Power Authority and to corporate Canada that we need to have a very strong second look at this.

The 1,500-metre zone, the separation that has been proposed in this bill, is a very solid proposal that deserves our support. It sends a message that there is a way of dealing with these very difficult issues, because the reality is, we have an incredible amount of demand for power, no matter what. Sometimes, as you know, we want things both ways: We want more power, cheap power, yet we don't want the power plants near us, and that's understandable. But certainly in this modern age of high-tech digital intelligence, we could find a way where corporate Canada could build these plants that are not a threat to schools, to neighbourhoods, to very sensitive airsheds. It just sort of confounds me that they would put this very sensitive building at this incredible bottleneck that we all well know of. It is not only an automotive bottleneck and an urban sprawl bottleneck, but it's an air-quality bottleneck that can't stand this type of ad hockery when it comes to putting in this type of needed power plant. It's not the place for it.

We, as legislators, through this process that Mr. Flynn has brought forward, have an opportunity to be part of the solution and not go back and finger-point on who did what when, and when they didn't do it. We've all made mistakes; let's get it right.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I, too, rise in support of the member from Oakville in terms of what he has put forward in his private member's bill.

What I believe has actually happened is that the member has identified that we have a gap in our planning process, and we need to deal with it. The fact remains that we were able to move forward. There is a need for power that has been identified. But at the same time, we've also identified that within that planning process, we didn't look at an adequate buffer zone. That's the reality check. Now we know. We step back. We manage

this in a way that's appropriate, that meets the needs of the community, the needs for additional power and, at the same time, puts that safety part first.

The World Bank, for example, has a buffer zone. They will not allow any development to occur where, in fact, it impacts on indigenous folks. They need a buffer zone. Alberta sour gas wells need a buffer zone. We have a buffer zone for wind turbines. Actually, there is an oil plant now going in close to a village in Africa, and they require a buffer zone. So it's a Planning Act process that we have identified through this bill, and we need to deal with it.

I don't think this has to be that onerous. If we've made a mistake, we need to step back, acknowledge it and ensure that we don't make the mistake again and that we find the adequate planning tools to move forward.

I served for 15 years as a school trustee. When planning a school, the first and most important thing we had was safety first for the children. So my question would be, if the gas plant were there in the beginning, would you now build a school next to it? Of course not. Now that there are schools there, would you consider building a gas plant next to it? Of course not, because safety is paramount for that community. What we need to do is ask: What are the answers, where are the solutions and how do we work with people to find a resolution to what is a fairly difficult problem?

I know that the member opposite spoke about Portlands extensively. The fact remains that Portlands had a coal- and gas-fired plant on that land for decades. This was the only city in the world that didn't have its own power source. This is not applicable to Oakville; it's an entirely different situation. We need to be able to recognize that we have a problem. It has been identified. We need to work with the community, we need to find a resolution and this is the beginning of how we can manage to do that.

I don't think we have to be difficult to deal with with each other. I think we can find a solution that supports the need for electricity but, at the same time, takes into consideration the location of that electricity, where it will be produced.

If we can't do that, it begs some other questions. Someone said to me at one point, "Well, it'll be built, but it'll never be used." I said to myself, "That begs about four other questions for me, because then why are we building a 945-megawatt peaker plant?" That certainly is also a part of that planning process.

We've put in place a very substantive way to deal with energy and the needs going forward into the future. It doesn't take a lot to step back and say, "We have a problem here; let's resolve it as we move forward." We can do this in a way that is not acrimonious to anyone.

Thank you, and I'm pleased to be able to support the member from Oakville.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm going to support this bill because it is the right thing to do.

I do want to ask the question, though, as to why we're here. We heard the fact that it was this government that actually passed legislation that took the power and the authority away from municipalities to have their say and that if the provincial government didn't have the wisdom to ensure that the setback was there, the buffer zone was there, that's what the municipal level of government would have been there to do, to ensure that it was done. This government took that authority away from local governments.

We have the same thing happening in King township, and I'd like to know if the members of the government will come with the same kind of aid for the people in King as they are now pretending to do for the people in Oakville.

Here's what I'm going to caution the people who are observing this debate from the sidelines: This is wonderful theatre. This is one way that the member has to say to his local community, "I stand up for you."

Here's what we will be watching. First of all, will this bill go to third reading and be given royal assent? Big question. I doubt it. I don't believe for one minute that what we're observing here is a process that will result in the government taking direction from this Legislature on this issue—not for one minute. It's a face-saving exercise—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Oakville, Mr. Flynn, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to thank the members for all their friendly comments, advice and assistance. It will be remembered; you can be assured of that.

I'd like to remind the last speaker that there was a government that imposed a power plant on my community, right on Winston Churchill Boulevard. It's called the Sithe plant, and I believe, Mr. Klees, you probably voted for that. So you want to talk about theatre? You've got a little confessing to do there, I think, member.

TransCanada will not have its approvals in place. The member asked if it's going to have its approvals in place before the end of this sitting, and I'm absolutely certain they will not have their approvals in place.

The member from Beaches-East York talked about municipal involvement in the location of a planning act. There are two gentlemen you can speak to. They may come down to your office in room 154. I haven't seen two people more involved in opposing the location of a power plant, and perhaps, had there been a better council in place in the city of Toronto, as active a council as I have in the town of Oakville, the outcome would have been a little different. Instead, you have people who are working on behalf of their own community to ensure that this plant does not become a reality. That didn't happen in the city of Toronto. You tried to block it in my own community. You tried to impose a power plant on my community of Oakville. We had petitions; we had 10,000 petitions that you ignored. Your government, Mr. Klees,

ignored 10,000 petitions and said, “That plant’s going to be built.”

I am determined to see this plant not built in my community. I believe that by supporting this today we put an end to this sort of thing in all our communities in the future and we stop the finger-pointing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We’ll vote on Mr. Flynn’s ballot item in about 50 minutes.

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC TRANSIT
SERVICES ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SERVICES
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN
ESSENTIELS

Mr. Caplan moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to resolve public transit services labour disputes without strikes or lock-outs / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à régler sans grève ni lock-out les conflits de travail au sein des services de transport en commun.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. David Caplan: We established, during first reading of the Essential Public Transit Services Act, 2010, that public transit indeed, whether one is a transit user or not, is very vital to the health, social and economic well-being of our city—I would argue, of our entire province. I’m concerned, as many Torontonians are, as many Ontarians are, about the reliability of our public transit services. Simply put, our cities cannot function properly without fully operational public transit systems.

Indeed, more than 1.3 million Torontonians rely on the Toronto Transit Commission, the TTC, each and every day to get to work, to get to school, to get to a medical appointment, or simply to live. Toronto in particular is not able to function without a working transit system, and Toronto is the capital city of our great province, Ontario, the fifth most populous city in North America, the economic and financial capital of Canada.

Given those unique factors above of population size, of special area and the vital economic function of our city, it becomes clear to me that a public transportation system in our city must be reliable and must be consistent. Unfortunately, through our city’s history, various transportation service disputes have too often left our city in chaos, left us paralyzed.

1540

Although public transit was identified by Metro Toronto’s founders as one of the essential services, there have been too many instances in which the TTC has failed to be just that.

The first of many strikes to come took place in 1952 and lasted 19 days. Another one followed in 1970 and lasted 12 days. The longest strike in the system’s history took place in 1974 and lasted 23 days. There are several more that I could chronicle, but I recall that in 1989, TTC

workers staged a 41-day slowdown. Although it was not a strike, it severely damaged the services provided, caused unbearable slowness and undermined ridership confidence. The strike in 1991 lasted eight days. A couple of years later, in 1999, there was a two-day strike. On May 29, 2006, a one-day wildcat strike took place when TTC employees suddenly walked off the job, causing severe disruption.

Most recently, after the TTC union voted down a contract as of midnight, April 26, 2008, the Toronto Transit Commission was officially on strike. This move quickly shut down buses, streetcars and subways that carry over 1.5 million people across the city every week-day. This Legislature convened over the weekend for an emergency session, having no real option but to act to send people back to work to avoid more hardship and disruption of our fellow citizens.

Indeed, over the course of history, of the last 12 rounds of bargaining, nine have ended in impasse; 75% of the time, it has been sent to arbitration.

It has become quite clear that any type of work stoppage or even the threat of work stoppage makes commuters second-guess whether they can trust transit to be there when they need it. We have seen the evidence of ridership plummeting after each and every disruption.

I say that enough is enough. I believe that the residents of Toronto—indeed, the residents of other cities in Ontario—want to see legislation that would put an end to this kind of disruption, and Bill 15 will do just that.

The purpose of the Essential Public Transit Services Act, 2010, is to designate the Toronto Transit Commission, the TTC, as an essential service. If enacted, this act will prohibit strikes and lockouts in connection with labour disputes between the TTC and its employees. If both sides cannot reach a negotiated settlement, issues will be determined through an arbitration process, as it has in nine of the last 12 rounds of bargaining.

Now, some might argue, and some do, that making transit an essential service or having arbitrated settlements will cost the city more money. I simply don’t buy that line of argument. In fact, even the most pessimistic predictions made by the C.D. Howe Institute foresee the potential cost at a mere—and get this—a measly half a penny per ride. The study doesn’t take into account, by the way, the \$4 million per day that strikes cost the TTC when they occur and, according to the city manager here in the city of Toronto, the shocking \$50 million per day that strikes cost the city economy.

I believe that most of the 1.3 million Torontonians who rely on the TTC each and every day would be willing to pay that extra 0.5 cents every time they rode the TTC if it meant the assurance of a reliable system, something that they could know was there when they needed it.

This bill also will authorize the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations extending this regime to any other public transit service in the province of Ontario. Recent examples, of course, abound: in Durham region; in London. London had a strike back in the winter, from November 16 to December 14, causing

hardship for thousands of students, thousands of seniors, working people who rely so heavily on public transit.

Overall, in order for Toronto and, indeed, many other cities and towns across Ontario to function properly, public transit needs to be declared essential: essential like the police, essential like firefighters.

It's time to recognize that public transit systems like the TTC are a vital part of our city, and to our economy, to our environment, to the workers, to the poor, to the disabled, to the seniors, to the students, most of whom simply have no other means of getting around.

There are many reasons that a reliable transit system is important to our citizens. They include the cost of driving—very expensive—the cost of gas—which is prohibitive—parking and insurance. In this age of diversity of our city's population, with its significant number of children living below legal driving age, our road and our parking infrastructure cannot handle increased use of private vehicles. Overall, the average daily ridership of the TTC exceeds 2.46 million passengers: almost 1.2 million by bus, about 325,000 by streetcar, 35,000 by intermediate rail, and over 900,000 by subway.

Traffic congestion: The Toronto region is one of the top five most congested in North America. The cost of additional congestion due to strikes is in the millions. According to a survey done by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, road congestion in the Toronto region costs our economy approximately \$2 billion a year in lost time and productivity. Public transit affects the residents economically, socially and for health reasons. Gridlock caused by transit strikes paralyzes the city and causes many detrimental effects to our local economy, to our environment, to our health and to the well-being of our residents. The economic loss I've mentioned to you, \$50 million per day, per 24-hour period, is due to employees being absent, lost customers, lost wages and lost service to taxpayers.

Environmental effects: During a public transportation strike, the environmental damage resulting from increase in motor vehicle use and pollution along with the accompanying traffic congestion can be calculated in the millions. Our public transit system contributes to cleaner air, to cleaner water, to less non-renewable fuel use and less vehicle waste. It helps preserve our green spaces from highway construction, reduces traffic noise, helps keep our trees, plants and forests green, and sustains our water. According to Dr. Franz Hartmann, executive director of the Toronto Environmental Alliance, "An affordable, efficient TTC is key to developing a healthy, green Toronto. Without Toronto's public transit system, the air would be much dirtier and more people would be dying prematurely because of smog-related illnesses. And without an efficient, effective TTC, Toronto would have no hope in curbing global warming."

Many more factors, but I was very heartened that Toronto city councillors have worked hard and diligently to bring this matter to the floor. On a municipal level, councillors Cliff Jenkins, Ward 25, Don Valley West, Cesar Palacio, Ward 17, Davenport, and Michael Thompson, Ward 34, Scarborough Centre, have been

strong proponents of declaring the Toronto Transit Commission an essential service. In fact, these councillors were leading the charge, working the city's subway platforms after the transit strike in 2008, asking riders to sign a petition. I have a quote from Councillor Jenkins:

"The TTC is an essential service. It is long overdue that elected representatives begin to treat it as a necessity, not merely a convenience. Governments can ensure fair wages and working conditions while also ensuring that essential transit services are maintained, and that vulnerable citizens are not held hostage to transit stoppages at every contract renewal. For the 1.3 million riders who rely on it every day, the TTC is essential. I applaud Mr. Caplan's efforts to bring forward this legislation on their behalf."

In conclusion, the TTC operates the main transportation system in Toronto, Canada's key economic, most populated and fourth most heavily used transportation system in all of North America. Toronto's road infrastructure is set up for both private and public service. It's time to pass legislation designating the TTC as essential, prohibiting strikes and lockouts. Commuters are fed up with work stoppages that disrupt the city and cost the local economy \$50 million a day. Poll after poll has revealed that declaring public transit an essential service is something that the vast majority of Torontonians would like to see happening.

1550

At the end of the day, my neighbours just want buses, trains and streetcars to be there when they need them. It was aforementioned that there are tremendous economic, social and health costs, but above all, many of the benefits are priceless: better trust in the system by citizens, which leads to better health, less stress, longer life, stronger communities, a stronger city and, indeed, a stronger province. Essential public transit service in Toronto is unavoidable. I say, enough is enough. Citizens all over our city have been left stranded too many times. It's time to regain their trust, and I would ask all my colleagues to support Bill 15.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak in response to Bill 15, An Act to resolve public transit services labour disputes without strikes or lock-outs, which has been brought forward by the member for Don Valley East.

This bill was introduced in the previous session before the House prorogued, if I'm not mistaken, but of course there wasn't enough opportunity. It was in the wintertime that it was first introduced, I think some time in February, but the member has brought it back in the current session of the Legislature to allow for a discussion during private members' time and an opportunity, hopefully, for a vote in just under an hour's time.

I want to compliment the member for Don Valley East for bringing this forward. I think he is certainly sincere in this initiative and wants to see the issue debated, and I know that he would want to see this bill pass.

I have enjoyed working with the member for Don Valley East since he was elected to the Legislature in 1999, if I'm not mistaken.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: After that? Oh, wow. Okay. He's been here for a while longer than that.

Certainly, when we've had House duty afternoons together, we've enjoyed our long conversations about the challenge of public life and the challenge of balancing family life with our public responsibilities. Certainly, when he was Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal and Minister of Health, I always appreciated his sympathetic ear to the concerns I was bringing forward and his willingness to at least listen. I'm not sure to what extent—I'm still trying to get that Fergus hospital, David. You may not be surprised to hear that.

At the same time, I think he has gone through a number of ups and downs during the course of his public career. It's fairly obvious that he was expected to carry responsibility for the eHealth scandal, which did not initiate under his watch as Minister of Health. Certainly another Minister of Health would have to bear responsibility for that; however, the member for Don Valley East, in the end, was expected to accept the responsibility of resigning. I know that the member has a great future ahead of him and clearly aspires to serve on the executive council again.

With respect to Bill 15, I had a chance to review some of the literature with respect to this bill, and I listened quite intently to what the member said in his presentation. I would agree with him that public transit is vital to the health and social well-being of the city of Toronto, and very important to the communities in the province of Ontario that have public transit.

He mentioned the need for reliability for people who are using the transit system to go to work, to their medical appointments, to do their shopping, to take their children across town or what have you. It is essential that that reliability be there. People need it, and the service needs to be consistent.

The member is motivated by a desire to eliminate the disputes and strikes that have taken place. He related to the House a number of instances when there have been long strikes going back to 1952. I didn't realize that we had as many strikes through the 1970s. He mentioned the slowdown in 1989 that went on for, I think, more than a month. More recently, since the McGuinty Liberals formed the government, I remember very vividly the one-day wildcat strike in 2006 and the one in 2008.

I was one of the members who was called down to a special Sunday emergency session in April 2008 so that we could pass back-to-work legislation to ensure that the next day, Monday morning, the TTC would operate and the city wouldn't be paralyzed in terms of people trying to get to work.

A number of us were here for that special Sunday session. If you think about it objectively and take a step back, if it was so essential that the Legislature would be called back on a Sunday afternoon in an emergency session to prevent a transit strike from taking place—if it

was that important that the Legislature would be called to do that and would do that in one day—unanimously, I would add—because unanimous consent was necessary and was offered by our side of the House—obviously this is a very important service.

The question is, is it essential? Whether it is or not is something the Legislature is going to decide, I think, this afternoon.

I have a couple of questions on my mind that I would want to ask the member. He's only got two minutes to reply, I realize that, but certainly there are other Liberals, I expect, who will participate in this debate. Maybe some of them will wish to speak to some of these issues.

The first question is: Why have there been so many transit strikes in Toronto, going back to 1952? Is it the culture of the union that makes unreasonable demands and is unwilling to accept certain realities on the part of its management? Or is it the responsibility of management? Is the management unfair? Is it consistently unfair? Why have there been so many? Why can't we find a way to bring those two parties together such that they can work together more so in the public interest—setting aside whatever individual goals and aspirations they might have—to look at the public interest first and foremost?

The second question I have is: What would this initiative cost? The member, I think, made an effort to answer that, and he talked about the fact that, in his estimation, it's one half a cent per ride. As I understood it, that would be added to the cost of the fare for anybody who's using the TTC. He cited a C.D. Howe Institute study. It's somewhat ironic that the C.D. Howe Institute came to that conclusion, because I remember C.D. Howe as the trade minister in the St. Laurent government who became quite notorious for his famous statement, "What's a million?"—as if to say that a million dollars didn't amount to that much. Of course, in those days, in the 1950s, most voters thought that a million dollars was a lot of money. If the government didn't have an understanding of that, that a million dollars of taxpayers' money was a lot of money, and didn't seem to understand that and respect it, perhaps they needed a reality check. Of course, shortly thereafter, in 1957, the Conservative government of John Diefenbaker, the minority government, was elected, and then they won a huge majority government in 1958—the biggest majority of any federal government up until that time. So when I look at the C.D. Howe Institute report, it would appear—according to the Toronto Star, at least—that it's a \$23-million cost over a three-year contract if TTC workers were to get similar deals. So we can talk about it as one half a cent per fare, but when you add it up, it would appear, according to this article in the Star, to be \$23 million.

Another question I would want to pose is: Who's going to pay this cost? Of course, we know it's going to be—it would appear that the riders will pay under this scenario, although the provincial government is called upon from time to time to contribute to the TTC. When there are TTC funding issues, of course, it is routine,

really, that the TTC comes to Queen's Park to ask for financial assistance.

Another question is: Can we afford this? I would, again, say that \$23 million is a lot of money on top of everything else. The city of Toronto has all kinds of financial problems that we hear about every day, or almost every day. The problems at city hall and the inability of the city of Toronto to control its costs and control its finances is well known. I think that we have to put this, even if it is a \$23-million increase, in perspective, obviously, with the overall financial management issues of the TTC.

The last question I would ask is: If this bill is passed, would it mean that there would be no more transit strikes? I know that the member would hope that that would be the case—although I have information here that there have been a number of wildcat strikes, certainly, in Toronto. They weren't really authorized by the union. Even in New York city, there have been transit strikes, even though, as I understand it, they have a system of binding arbitration and a ban on strikes. So I think it's probably true that this won't end strikes for all time. If the culture of the union and the culture of the management is to be unwilling to work together in the public interest and find ways to come together and find a solution to their differences, certainly that would be another issue that I think needs to be considered.

When we look back at some of the articles that have appeared on this subject, such as in the National Post, April 28, I think it's interesting to point out—this appears to be an editorial from the National Post. This is around the time of the TTC strike, and it reads as follows:

“Following the Friday evening vote, TTC workers went on strike, breaking their own union's promise to give commuters 48 hours' notice. The resulting mayhem saw thousands of Toronto residents left with no option but to walk for hours to get home as taxi companies were overwhelmed by demand. Residents are understandably angry—especially since TTC operators currently take home a very handsome wage of \$26.58 an hour, plus benefits. They also enjoy the opportunity to increase their take-home through overtime—which is abundantly available because the current contract makes it difficult to hire part time staff.

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“On Sunday, Ontario's Premier, Dalton McGuinty, with the support of all the opposition parties, reconvened the provincial Legislature and passed back-to-work legislation that had the TTC up and rolling as of Sunday night. In giving in to populist pressure, Mr. McGuinty and his fellow provincial politicians took away Toronto's freedom to negotiate a deal with its transit workers, forcing the city into binding arbitration. In doing so, the Premier earned populist hurrahs. But the folks clapping their hands may not realize what this means: Not surprisingly, the transit union has presented Toronto with a new list of expensive demands that were not part of the original deal signed a week ago.”

I say that because I think it's important to remember this most recent strike and really what happened.

The article concludes, “For the long-term financial well-being of Toronto, its transit users and indeed for taxpayers across the country who help fund the city's transit system by one means or another, Toronto must be made to do better. The first step in that process is to resist calls to make the TTC an essential service, a step that would permanently eliminate the ability of the transit workers to strike. While this sounds superficially desirable, especially given Friday's pandemonium, it would be a mistake in the long run. Such a label would entail an automatic pay premium, something already enjoyed by the city's police and fire fighters, who signed a deal negotiated in secret last year that saw fire fighters win a 9.66% wage increase over three years.”

I say this because I think it's important to put the opposite perspective on the record for members to consider.

I certainly look forward to hearing this debate as it unfolds. I'm open to the arguments that the member is bringing forward in terms of his idea as to what should happen. At the same time, I want to hear the rest of the debate. My time is winding down, but I certainly want to thank you for listening to my comments this afternoon. I look forward to the debate as it unfolds, and again, I thank the member for Don Valley East for bringing this issue forward this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was really quite surprised today. As I listened to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, I just found his questions ever so thoughtful, ever so mildly Conservative—not even mildly Conservative, but as an observer who looks at this issue ever objectively and says, “Hmm. I've got a number of questions here that need to be answered.” I like your questions; I really do.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm a TTC rider. I really am.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But the questions were very good. I'm going to touch on some of them as well, because I liked them.

I want to tell my friend from Don Valley East—he is a friend of mine, but I'm going to tell him that I won't support this bill. I suspect that most New Democrats would never support this kind of bill or this kind of initiative. I'm going to tell you why. There are three or four things I want to talk about.

What brought about this? Because it's interesting to have seen, immediately after the member from Don Valley East presented it, the reaction from the minister and the immediate reaction thereafter by the Premier. I found it fascinating, because after Mr. Caplan, the member from Don Valley East, tabled the bill and Transportation Minister Kathleen Wynne declared it a non-starter, the Premier said in the Legislature that it's an important issue for the mayoralty race. This is what the Premier said: “I want to applaud David Caplan's private member's bill as it reflects an appropriate source of concern about the cost of a TTC strike to the city and commuters—there can be no doubt that work stoppages cause a huge disruption. I look forward to the debate

continuing in the Legislature—including a full committee hearing with public consultations. Based on the outcome of that debate, we can have a fulsome”—and I remind the Speaker about the word “fulsome” that Peter Kormos had of course made reference to when he took out a dictionary and said how inappropriate the use of the word “fulsome” is, but that’s another issue—“discussion about the options the city might have in the future.”

It’s interesting here: The Premier thinks it’s a good debate; the Minister of Transportation believes that it’s a non-starter, that debate should end on that particular issue of this particular bill that is before us.

So we’ve got some interesting parliamentary tendencies here. David Caplan from Don Valley East says, “Yes, end the strike.” The Minister of Transportation in charge says, “Whoa, whoa, that’s a non-starter for me.” The same day, if I recall, the Premier said, “Yes, that’s a good idea.” Hmm.

It’s beautiful that a minister could stand up and say, on the same day, “No, go home, David,” and the Premier says to the minister, “You go home, Minister, because I’ve got something else to say,” and everybody feels great to be able to have their point of view. Beautiful. I love that. That is the new political Liberal Party before us. I kind of like it.

Here’s what I think. I think a whole lot of Liberals like the idea. I do. And it’ll be interesting to see who votes for it today.

Some will say, “Oh, it’s a private member’s bill. Really, come on, it’s got nothing to do with Liberal. It’s just a personal opinion. It’s a private member’s bill, for God’s sake.” Uh-uh. The Premier said a couple of years ago, in 2008, “It’s not fair for 1.5 million commuters to (be told) they can’t use the system on Monday morning.”

I quote him further: “If there was some kind of an approach made within the course of the next three years by the city of Toronto ... saying we have decided ourselves that it would be a good thing for us to have our public transit system essential, that is something that we, at Queen’s Park, would have to consider.”

The Premier was desperately reaching out to David Miller and the city council, to say, “Let’s make it an essential service,” so that the Premier could say, “Hmm, city council is asking for it. We will comply.”

David Miller and city councils do not ask for an end to TTC strikes. Therefore, we have before us David Caplan, the member from Don Valley East, who emerges from the backbenches and volunteers himself to present a bill on behalf of the Premier, good soldier that he is. That’s why the bill is before us.

The Premier wants to test this thing out. He wants to be able to say, “No, no, no, it’s a private member’s bill.”

It will pass. It will go to committee. It will be debated. We will see public reaction. We will see how many people come to depute. Based on the editorials from all the newspapers and the level of support that we get of that bill, we, the government—meaning you, fine Liberals—will, in the end, support it for third reading debate and eventually proclaim it, and there you have it. We’ll congratulate David for having brought it forth and

doing a good thing. It will be seen to be an initiative of a member who just had a good idea.

I wanted to give a little bit of that background. My suspicion is, the minister won’t support it today, to be consistent with her original position on this. But I’m looking forward to seeing what the others will do.

That is the first part of the comments: Why is it before us?

The second part is to comment on what my colleague from Don Valley East said. He doesn’t buy the study done by the C.D. Howe Institute, which is, by the way, not an organization that generally supports the NDP. I think they’re closer to the Conservative Party in general. I suspect they could lend their support quite often to the Liberal Party, as well. “According to a study last year by the public policy think tank, declaring a public service ‘essential,’ automatically sending intractable labour disputes to arbitration rather than allowing full strikes or lockouts, increases the cost of wage settlements by an average 13%,” says Benjamin Dachis, the author of the report. “More than that, it does not eliminate work disruptions or partial strikes. Indeed, the study shows that the likelihood of work disruptions such as work-to-rule campaigns or other slowdowns increases by 5% under an essential services designation. And such disruptions last much longer.”

1610

Now, understand, this is a C.D. Howe Institute study. This is not a labour group, not friends of ours, who obviously say to you, member from Don Valley East, that it’s going to cost. I know you don’t believe them, but why would a Conservative think tank take a position of this sort if they didn’t think this was true? You say that you don’t believe it, but you don’t base it on facts. You simply don’t believe it. So we put to you that there will be greater costs.

As the member from Wellington–Halton Hills said, who’s going to bear that cost? Interestingly, he said, as I heard you say, the TTC rider, as if he’s not paying enough. Interestingly, you were saying that if the rider isn’t paying it, the city of Toronto will have to pick up that cost. If it’s \$25 million under the stressful economic conditions they’ve been facing for years—with the level of cutbacks from the provincial governments before yours, and including yours—they will have to find 25 million bucks more that they do not have. You’re saying, “That’s okay, because there’s a greater good to be had. We need to reach out to those who are frustrated when a strike happens. They’re so angry; they want to be able to get on that TTC. And strikes be damned and negotiations be damned and the right to be able to negotiate be damned.”

The member from Don Valley East knows he’s tapping into a lot of visceral reaction that exists out there. I know that. The Premier knows it and so do many others. So the Premier is philosophically proclaiming himself to be on the right side of this particular bill before us.

I want to quote something else as well. In addition to the costs to send this to arbitration, John Manwaring, a

labour law expert at the University of Ottawa, says that “the problem with strike bans is that they tend to bottle up tensions.

“By banning strikes entirely, you shut off the safety valve, which is the strike, and you hold in the pressure,” he said. “If the relations between employer and employees deteriorate, you often end up with an illegal strike, which is harder to resolve. The best solution is to develop good labour relations with the employees.”

This bill doesn’t do that. I want to say to the member from Don Valley East that since 1974, the TTC has had nine strikes and work-to-rule campaigns, including an illegal one-day walkout in 2006, a two-day strike in 1999 and an eight-day job action in 1991. Clearly, for the member from Don Valley East, that’s just too much to bear. We shouldn’t have to deal with it, and people who feel as strongly as he does shouldn’t have to put up with this.

The New Democrats disagree with you, member from Don Valley East. We don’t believe that this does anything to help our relationships with workers. Free collective bargaining is a right that workers should have.

I end by saying that this bill does not improve public transit and does not improve customer relations at the TTC. What it does is deliberately pick a fight with TTC workers and blames them for this government’s shortfall.

I will be opposing your bill, David, with all due respect, and all New Democrats will be opposing it when it comes down to this vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have about four minutes. First of all, I’d like to compliment and congratulate the member from Don Valley East for bringing the issue for debate in the House.

I heard the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, who had a number of questions, but he says that he’s going support it, which is very nice. Of course, there are always questions when a bill is freshly introduced.

My colleague the member from Trinity–Spadina, I believe, is always in defence of the workers, and who can fault him for that? But this bill is not with respect to the workers. I think every member of the House has the greatest of support for the workers, not only in that particular department that is the TTC, the transportation area, but I think for every city employee. Because we have a few bad apples, if you will, here and there, we can’t put everybody in the same bag.

I think the thing to do here, my friendly member from Trinity–Spadina, is to send this to the people of Ontario. How are we going to do that? Let’s approve this bill from this particular stage here. Let’s move it on. Let’s hear from the people of Ontario.

If the people running for mayor want to pick it up, if they want to debate it, if they want to show their own interest in the matter, which is a very serious, important issue, so be it. At least we will have one particular area where we know where they stand or they should be standing. As a matter of fact, member from Don Valley East, I think it should be part of the debate during this

coming municipal election. It’s not a question of eliminating strikes or disputes; it is making Toronto the city that it should be and giving the people of Toronto the service that they need, that they require, that they deserve.

If there is one thing that I remember from the various disruptions, it is when people would meet me on the street, in the plaza, in the malls, at the coffee shop or at church and say, “Do something. Do something,” because everyone was being affected by the lockout or the strike.

I don’t think that the workers want to strike, that they want to go on lockout. What are we really taking away from the workers? They are reasonably well compensated. They are paid. They have a good pension plan. They are well respected. They will go to arbitration and, most of the time, they get more than what they would be getting in renegotiating a particular agreement.

Really, what are we talking about here? I think we should be finding out more of what the people of Toronto have to say about that, and we will be hearing from the business community, from the various interested parties, from the individual citizens who are being affected.

I would say to the House today that the member from Don Valley East has brought to this House an important bill. Let’s approve it. Let’s forward it. Let’s hear from the people of Toronto. Let’s answer some of those questions, and we will be taking it from here.

I thank you, Speaker, for the time that I have been allowed to speak on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It’s a pleasure to rise again, this time in support of what I think is a great bill being brought forward by my colleague from Don Valley East.

I think it’s timely that this bill be brought forward at this time as well because, often, most of the talk surrounding this issue is when a strike is pending or when a labour lockout is starting to be something that may be taking place. That’s when people start talking about it. We’re not facing that right now, so I think it’s a very calm time to have a frank discussion, a discussion that I think is really necessary.

If you look at the track record of the success of the collective bargaining around the province of Ontario, it’s a very enviable record. It’s one we should all be proud of in this province. However, when you look at the Toronto Transit Commission, they’ve had nine strikes since 1974, work-to-rule campaigns as well, and they had an illegal walkout, of course, in 2006. The London transit strike left people in London paralyzed, in a strike that lasted for almost a month. That was back in 2008. And, of course, 2008–09 saw another transit strike in Ottawa that lasted 51 days.

This is important to my constituents as well. People might wonder, “Why would a person from Oakville be interested in what is essentially a Toronto-centred issue when you’re looking at the Toronto Transit Commission?” Many of my constituents travel to Toronto on a daily basis. This is where they earn their living. This is where they do their work.

The Essential Public Transit Services Act, which has been put forward by my colleague, is very thoughtful. It prohibits strikes and lockouts. It allows the transit system to continue to run.

1620

The way we organize ourselves as a society today, especially a complex urban society like Toronto, you need that transit system on a daily basis. When you don't have it, everything shuts down. I think it's in the best interests of everybody that these types of disputes be resolved by arbitration while allowing for the service to continue.

At the end of the day, you have to understand that we, at all levels of government, are responsible to our constituents. It's our job to make sure that service continues. It's also our job to honour, in whichever way we can, a collective bargaining process. The Essential Public Transit Services Act that is being proposed by my colleague allows for that bargaining process to continue by arbitration.

Residents of Toronto and other cities have learned pretty clearly that, whether you use it or not, public transit severely impacts the economy of the city when it is shut down. It severely impacts the taxpayers of the city as well.

So from an economic point of view, from an environmental point of view and from the point of view of health and medical costs, there are certainly great reasons to support this proposed bill that is before us today.

We know it results in economic losses if we have a strike or lockout. We know there's an increase in pollution from motor vehicle use, congestion and gridlock on the streets. There's a rise in health problems, and just the stress alone for people wondering how they're going to get to work in the morning, whether they're going to be allowed to keep their job if they aren't at work the next morning—it's the sort of stress our families don't need.

I think the member has brought forward a sensible solution to all this. It honours all parties and allows the process to continue. More importantly, I think, it serves the needs of constituents, whom we should all be aspiring to serve on a daily basis.

I think it is well thought out, I think it's sensible and I think it deserves the support of all members of this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M. Shafiq Qadri: Je veux remercier mon collègue le représentant de Don Valley East pour avoir attiré l'attention d'Ontario et particulièrement de cette Chambre sur ces questions et ces points si importants.

It's a privilege and an honour to rise to support my colleague David Caplan, MPP for Don Valley East, as he brings forward what is no doubt a much-needed, much-overdue and very measured approach, the Essential Public Transit Services Act, 2010.

Many of my colleagues on both sides of the House have, of course, very appropriately cited the economic, the medical, the gridlock—all the different areas that a strike in a major metropolitan region can cause. Of

course, it is to avoid this, to keep the city working, to keep Toronto the Good good, to keep everything running efficiently, that he is bringing forward this particular bill.

In addition to all the various comments that have been laid forth, in terms of delays and economic loss, I bring to the attention of those who are listening to me and those in Ontario, and you, Speaker, the Ottawa transit strike that happened about a year and a half ago, in January 2009. I would just cite for a moment, for the good citizens of Toronto—if they could just do a little Ottawa projection onto the city of Toronto, let's map, for a moment, what took place in Ottawa and revisit, had that actually happened here.

I remind this chamber that that strike took 51 days. As you can imagine, it paralyzed the nation's capital. Now, arguably, Ottawa being the centre of federal politics, maybe it was not particularly noticeable, but I think a similar kind of paralysis, a strike of similar duration in the city of Toronto—51 days—would literally have been catastrophic.

Of course, we as a government had the opportunity, responsibility, duty and privilege to deal with exactly that type of brewing situation, as has been mentioned here, I believe, in April of 2008, when all of us who are currently elected in this Legislature were here. We had to come into session during an emergency meeting on a Sunday, as was mentioned, to actually legislate the TTC workers back, because we knew the extraordinary cost, the human cost, the 1,000 points of light that were affected.

Again, people have mentioned gridlock and traffic. If I might be permitted just for a moment as a physician to talk about the human suffering, the human element—for example, individuals who had medical appointments, be it with family physicians, be it at hospitals, who needed to go for various tests. More importantly, I heard from constituents who were due to go and be told the results of tests: “Do you or do you not have cancer? What is the lump in the mammogram actually showing? Does this or that medication work? Would they be able to pick up medications from pharmacies?” and so on. All of these are, of course, elements, items in that very long list of the human cost.

So I would commend my colleague the honourable David Caplan for bringing forward this particular bill, because he deals not only with the economic efficiency, with the workings of a major metropolitan city, but also with future planning and, of course, using the Legislature and all its various tools to ultimately empower the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member, Mr. Caplan, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. David Caplan: I'd like to thank all five members who chose to speak to Bill 15.

The member from Etobicoke North points out the situation in Ottawa.

The member from Oakville actually made a very interesting comment: that this was timely. One of reasons why this particular bill is quite timely is that the next

round of bargaining, that a contract ends, is the spring of 2011. So it's important to establish the ground rules well before we get there.

The member from York West talks about the business community. In fact, I would say to the member from York West that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business surveyed its members, and in excess of 80% of their members said that this was the measure that they felt should be taken to provide them with stability, certainty, and to forgo the economic loss that those members face when they do have this kind of disruption.

The member from Trinity–Spadina says, “What brought this about?” That’s a good question. I was contacted significantly by my neighbours in Don Valley East back in the last round of contract negotiations when things went awry. Seniors told me that they missed medical appointments. Parents told me they had tremendous difficulty getting their children to school. It’s for my neighbours and for the residents of the city of Toronto that this needs to be done.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills asked a series of very good and excellent questions. I do want to provide him some answers. Why have we had so many strikes? I believe that is because both management and the union know that the Legislature will step in and order this to arbitration, as they have done 75% of the time they have had disruption in the last 30 years. What’s the cost? According to C.D. Howe, \$11 million to \$23 million, or half a cent per ticket per ride. Who pays? I think the rider should. And can we afford it? I say to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills: We can’t afford not to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members’ public business has now expired.

ENHANCING THE ABILITY
OF INCOME SUPPORT RECIPIENTS
TO BE FINANCIALLY
INDEPENDENT ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 REHAUSSANT
L'AUTONOMIE FINANCIÈRE
DES BÉNÉFICIAIRES
DU SOUTIEN DU REVENU

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 10, standing in the name of Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 and the Taxation Act, 2007. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Barrett?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wonder if we could see our way clear to refer this bill for further deliberation to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs? Agreed? So ordered.

SEPARATION DISTANCES
FOR NATURAL GAS
POWER PLANTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT
DE DISTANCES DE SÉPARATION
POUR LES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
AU GAZ NATUREL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 11, standing in the name of Mr. Flynn.

Mr. Flynn has moved second reading of Bill 8, An Act to establish separation distances for natural gas power plants. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”
In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members after the next vote.

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC TRANSIT
SERVICES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SERVICES
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN
ESSENTIELS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item 12, standing in the name of Mr. Caplan.

Mr. Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 15, An Act to resolve public transit services labour disputes without strikes or lock-outs.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1630 to 1635.

SEPARATION DISTANCES
FOR NATURAL GAS
POWER PLANTS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT
DE DISTANCES DE SÉPARATION
POUR LES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
AU GAZ NATUREL

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Flynn has moved second reading of Bill 8. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Delaney, Bob	Miller, Norm
Arnott, Ted	Dhillon, Vic	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Elliott, Christine	Murray, Glen R.
Barrett, Toby	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Jones, Sylvia	Rinaldi, Lou
Cansfield, Donna H.	Klees, Frank	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Sergio, Mario
Chudleigh, Ted	Kular, Kuldip	
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arthurs, Wayne

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 28; the nays are 1.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I would like this bill referred to general government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the general government committee? So ordered.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the order referring Bill 8 to committee be discharged, and the bill ordered for third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be ordered for third reading? I heard a no. Having heard a no, all those in favour of the motion will please—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Sorry, it was unanimous consent. I heard a no. We don't have unanimous consent.

We'll open the doors for 30 seconds and then do Mr. Caplan's bill.

ESSENTIAL PUBLIC TRANSIT
SERVICES ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LES SERVICES
DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN
ESSENTIELS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Caplan has moved second reading of Bill 15. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Dhillon, Vic	Miller, Norm
Bailey, Robert	Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qaadri, Shafiq
Caplan, David	Jones, Sylvia	Ruprecht, Tony
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Kular, Kuldip	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Colle, Mike	Murray, Glen R.
Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Rinaldi, Lou
Brownell, Jim	Levac, Dave	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Marchese, Rosario	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 14.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Caplan.

Mr. David Caplan: I ask that it be referred to the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the general government committee? Agreed. So ordered.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

1640

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RETIREMENT HOMES ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LES MAISONS
DE RETRAITE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 15, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 21, An Act to regulate retirement homes / Projet de loi 21, Loi réglementant les maisons de retraite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This morning during question period, I heard the Acting Premier of the province of Ontario give an impassioned defence of the government's proposed changes to the Ministry of Education sex education curriculum. I've heard a rumour that the Premier of Ontario has done a complete 180—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd ask the honourable member to take his seat. Please take your seat. I think you know that—that doesn't appear to be a point of order. Debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, I was going to seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow a government minister, perhaps, to inform the House as to what exactly has happened. Perhaps the Minister of Transportation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Do we have unanimous consent? I hear some noes. Further debate, please. Any debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I know that the debate is winding down, but I want to be on the record in terms of this very

important bill. Much of what is contained within the body of the bill is good. Much of what is contained within the body of the bill is going to help those people who live in retirement homes, and by extension, the family of those people who live in retirement homes. We all know, and I think that we all believe, that those people in those retirement homes are some of our most cherished citizens. They are very vulnerable. They are, in most cases, very old. Some of them have physical and mental incapacities, but they are also people who have done great service to the people of our province and of our country. Some of them have fought for us in times of war. Others have worked in munitions factories. They have all raised families. They have all built the infrastructure of this wonderful province. I believe that we owe them the very best, not only the very best in terms of the type of entertainment, food and care that we are able to give them, but the very best in safety.

There is one glaring omission in this bill, and that glaring omission, in my view, is the provision for putting in fire sprinklers in all of the retirement homes. We know that a number of fires over the last 10 years have claimed a dozen or so or 15 lives. We know that this has happened. Every time there is a major fire in one of these retirement homes, there appears to be death. One needs to ask why this is happening. Quite simply, in my view—and I have been to so many retirement homes over the course of my political life of more than 21 years—it is that the homes tend to be old. A lot of them were built 20, 30, 50, even 100 years ago. They are not up to today's fire code. They are nice places to live, but they are not safe places to live. So we have to look at that, first of all: Are these safe places to live? Do they meet the fire code?

I know that I asked myself the same question on other bills. My own private member's bill, which has been before the House four times and is still awaiting third reading, is a bill which would outlaw wooden fire escapes. The only reason we have wooden fire escapes, or the only reason we have fire escapes, is that the building otherwise does not meet code and we have to give egress from a different location. Oftentimes, older apartment buildings build a fire escape in order to bring themselves back within the ambit of the fire code.

I use this by reason of extension to say that we need to look at the methods of escape in nursing homes. We have a very different circumstance. Most nursing homes are built on one or two or three floors. I don't think I have ever visited one which is multi-storey, but I'm sure there must be some of those as well.

We have the difficulty of people who suffer from all kinds of ailments: physical ailments, mental ailments, dementia, extreme old age. These people—our mothers, our fathers, our uncles, our aunts—deserve the very best. We try to give them that best. We have people who help them to dress. We have people who help to feed them if they require that. We have people who provide entertainment, who take them from room to room in order that they may socialize. These are the same people who are

instructed, in times of distress, if there is a fire or other emergency, to get them wherever they are and to get them out of the building to the safety of firefighters or to the safety of just the outside air.

We know that the ratio between those who live in the retirement homes and those who work in the retirement homes is often not as high as it needs to be, and we know that the people who try to provide the service will do the very best within their capacity to go into a building that is being evacuated and to try to make sure that everyone gets out. Unfortunately, it has all too often been the experience that they cannot get in in sufficient time to get the people out before fires, smoke inhalation, collapsed walls, all of the things that happen, occur.

We know we can slow that process down. Many times the fire departments have been here in front of the Legislature, and they have shown us the flashpoint. They have shown us that in the first four to five minutes of a fire, it can be contained and it generally does not cause any loss of life unless you are in very close proximity to it. What happens, though, after four or five minutes, is that a flashpoint develops. The fire starts to burn hotter and faster, the wind vectors in, and with all of those, the fire gets out of control.

That's usually around the time the fire departments arrive, because they are located in places around cities and towns and they try to maintain a four- or five-minute distance once they get a fire alarm. All too often, it may be too late. If there are seven or eight minutes, it may be too late.

The reason for sprinklers in retirement homes or anywhere else is that they are extremely successful in sensing smoke and fire and heat. It melts the wax or the compound that holds the water back. The sprinklers start and deaden the advance of the fire. Oftentimes, although it does not put it out, it maintains it in such a benign state—if I can use that word—that the fire does not get out of control.

I know that my colleague, now the Minister of Natural Resources, has introduced many times over the course of the years, before being elevated to the ministry, a bill that would mandate sprinklers in private homes. But I think it is even more serious and more important that we put the sprinklers in retirement homes. It is even more important that they be in places where people do not have the same access or physical ability to get out of a burning building. I know that the majority of people, those who are younger than me, would have the wherewithal to climb out a window, to get to a second place of egress, to get around the fire if they heard in it time, and get out of the building. But someone with dementia, someone who is mobility impaired, someone who does not have the wherewithal of moving quickly or getting downstairs or whatever, requires that the staff is there, and unfortunately, the staff is not. In the absence of putting additional staff and having that staff there 24 hours a day in the eventuality of a fire, I think the better cost option and the one that will provide the greatest level of safety for the least amount of cost is to put in a sprinkler system.

I know that this is somewhat contentious. I know that the fire officers in Ontario have said it is but one program that they would like to institute. The fire chiefs, on the other hand, say that they should be mandatory, and there is a bit of a debate between those who are the bosses and those who follow those orders as to what can be done. But it would seem logical to me that we put the sprinklers into each and every one of the homes, because in the end I would much rather, as a person in this Legislature, wake up in the morning and open up the newspaper and, sadly, see that there was a fire in a place like Brantford and see that everybody got out because there were sprinklers there than to read the paper and see that people died because there were no sprinklers. I think we have that obligation here to look after the weakest members of our community, the frail and elderly, those who cannot accommodate for themselves. This is a reasonable and rational thing to do.

I have heard the minister, the Solicitor General, talk about how he's weighing the options. I wasn't really sure whether he felt that it should be in there or not, but I am asking the members here to think very carefully about this when it is ordered—this is second reading, I trust.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is second reading. If it is ordered to go to committee, it is one of those motions that I would like to make or have someone in my party make, to include this provision of sprinklers in retirement homes over the next number of years. I do recognize that for some retirement homes the cost may be a little onerous. I recognize that. But if we can phase them in, if we can give the retirement homes three or four or five years to do the necessary repairs on a cycle when repairs are being undertaken in the home, I do not think it has to be onerous. I certainly know that if it was my mother living in a home without sprinklers, I would want there to be some there. I think most of us in this Legislature would share the same concern if it was one of our parents

who was there: that we knew, in our absence and in the absence, perhaps, in the middle of the night, of sufficient staff, there would be some mechanism to hold them safe.

That's the element of the debate I wish to speak to. It's the only thing that I think is missing particularly from this bill. I am asking the government, when this goes to committee, to seriously consider adding this provision. If you do so, in my view, you will make a good bill better. If you do so, you will protect the lives of those we want to protect. And in the end, all of those people who say not to do it—the only rationale I have heard to date is that it is expensive. Please consider that expense—put it in over a number of years, give some kind of incentive, if that's what needs to happen to private retirement homes, by way of money or tax rebate or whatever is required—but please do it. In the end, we will be protecting the lives of those heroes, those people who have built this province and to whom we owe so much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments? Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 21. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): So ordered. Orders of the day?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1654.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cookville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

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

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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

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

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