



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 28 September 2010

Mardi 28 septembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 28 September 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 28 septembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to direct your attention to O'Brien and Bosc, second edition, House of Commons Procedure and Practice. On page 530, under the heading "Substantive motions," it reads: "Substantive motions are independent proposals which are complete in themselves, and are neither incidental to nor dependent upon any proceeding already before the House. As self-contained items of business for consideration and decision, each is used to elicit an opinion or action of the House. They are amendable and must be phrased in such a way as to enable the House to express agreement or disagreement with what is proposed."

This is the basis of the idea that a motion cannot compel the House or the Legislature to do something that is not within its power.

I would now like to call your attention to the motion put forward by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The motion calls on the federal government to "fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement." This makes the motion confusing and incorrect in its essence.

In May 2010, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, along with his federal counterpart, extended this very agreement until March 2011. Therefore, the motion is calling upon us to consider a defunct agreement when the agreement is very much still alive, and asks the House to do something that therefore would not be within its power.

I also considered the possibility of amending the motion. However, again, this is changing the very basis of the motion: that the agreement is expired when it is not.

I call your attention to an announcement made by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration on May 5, 2010. I quote from the news release announcing the extension of the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement: "Ontario is pleased to sign this one-year extension as we negotiate a successor agreement, so that newcomers to the province

can continue to receive the services they need to settle and succeed," said Minister Hoskins." This is proof that the agreement is in existence and, therefore, the motion is out of order, as it would require the House to do something that is not within its power.

I quote standing order 14, which says, "Whenever the Speaker is of the opinion that a motion offered to the House is contrary to the rules and privileges of Parliament, the Speaker shall rule it out of order and may quote the rule or authority applicable." I have quoted for you the rule on substantive motions, and I have shown how this motion breaches that rule. I would therefore ask that you rule this motion out of order at this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Mr. Speaker, obviously this motion is not out of order. What we are requesting through this motion, though it has not actually been read to the House, is that we are calling on the federal government to immediately commence negotiations. The five-year agreement that my friend has referred to has expired. We have a one-year extension, but obviously, in order to move forward and to support our immigrants and new Canadians, we need to have an agreement in place and we need to start the negotiations. What we are asking through this motion is that the House support our government in its attempted negotiations with the federal government and that we call on the federal government to support us in this and to initiate discussions and negotiations into a new agreement.

What the opposition today is moving is not relevant to this particular motion. This motion is in order. It represents what we hope will be the will of the Legislature to support us in our negotiations with the federal government and to support us in supporting our new Canadians. If the opposition does not feel that it wants to support this motion and support new Canadians in Ontario, that is their decision and they can make that decision in the debate on this motion. But this motion is actually in support of engaging the federal government, which is actually a live issue at this particular time, as the federal government is not coming to the table to engage in discussions. It is about engaging in discussions for an agreement that will expire, that is expiring, we all know, at the end of March 2011. If we don't start discussions now, we will have no agreement in 2011-12, which is vitally important to our new Canadians in Ontario.

This is a live issue. This is an important issue for Ontarians, for new Ontarians in particular, and for our

government. We hope that the opposition will support us in this motion.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: On a point of order, I'm just asking the Chair: Are we debating something that isn't yet on the floor? There's no motion before us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We're discussing a point of order. Member from Beaches–East York?

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, to weigh in on this just a little, the clear wording of what is on the order paper does state, about mid-paragraph, "asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement." It states categorically that it is recently expired. I think that, should the government wish to put this forward, they should amend it prior to it being debated, because it's very clear from what is being put forward that they are stating it has expired whereas, in fact, it has been extended. So it is not technically correct, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke correctly put.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: In fact, the five-year agreement has expired. There is in place a one-year interim agreement. What we are proposing and what we are asking for support from the opposition and from this House on is that we immediately commence negotiations of a new agreement. That is what we're proposing. We have only until March to get this new agreement in place.

This motion is completely in order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the honourable members. I will take a five-minute recess to consult with the table.

The House recessed from 0909 to 0916.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for raising the issue, and for the comments by the government House leader, the member from Essex and the member from Beaches–East York.

This certainly presents a question of semantics on which there is clear disagreement, but beyond that it is not for the Speaker to parse the meaning behind the words in a motion, nor for the Speaker to be the arbiter over a difference of opinion. During the arguments made on the point of order, it was clear that both sides of the House can successfully argue the semantics in the motion, but a debate over the precise meaning does not negate the procedural orderliness of the motion. The key to the orderliness of a motion is whether it presents an intelligible question to the House which the House can resolve. In my opinion, the motion as currently worded does so.

However, this is a substantive government motion and it is therefore capable of being amended. It is open to any member to propose an amendment to either delete elements of it or add to it in such a manner as to try and make it more acceptable to a wider number of members. The House therefore possesses the means to resolve the alleged factual irregularity, if it agrees such exists,

simply on whether or not it chooses to amend the motion or whether or not it chooses to pass the motion with or without amendment. I suggest that this would be the procedurally correct manner in dealing with what amounts to a disagreement over the precision of the language in the motion. I find the motion to be in order and will allow the debate to proceed.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding \$207 million promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately commence negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hoskins has moved government notice of motion number 29. Debate?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today as Ontario's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to speak to this important matter.

For generations, immigrants have chosen Ontario as their new home because of the opportunities they have right here in this province to create a better life for themselves and for their families. Newcomers to Ontario want the same opportunities that we all aspire to: They want meaningful employment, a good education and a high quality of life.

The province of Ontario has always been a place where immigrants can strive to achieve their full potential. Ontario has been fortunate. Many of these immigrants have not only succeeded but have become household names, such as businessman and philanthropist Michael Lee-Chin, filmmaker Deepa Mehta, former Governor General Adrienne Clarkson and former cabinet minister, and currently our Fairness Commissioner, Jean Augustine. These remarkable individuals have inspired us and have left an indelible imprint with their valuable contributions. There are also millions of newcomers who may not be household names but through their hard work have made and continue to make our province vibrant, strong and prosperous. They have made Ontario one of the best places in the world in which to live.

As many of my honourable and esteemed colleagues know, Ontario has always been the destination of choice for new Canadians. Today, our province continues to receive the majority of newcomers who immigrate to Canada. Our province receives approximately 110,000

newcomers each and every year. That is more than the combined total of the next two provinces.

Why is Ontario attractive to so many people from around the world? Why is Ontario attractive to people from Africa, Latin America, Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East and Europe? It's because Ontario is renowned for being open, vibrant, peaceful, compassionate and inclusive. That's important, because now more than ever our province needs to attract the best and the brightest.

As we said in the speech from the throne, immigration is Ontario's lifeblood. It's our demographic future. It is fuel for our economic engine. With an aging population and a declining birthrate, Ontario's future prosperity depends on immigration. Attracting skilled newcomers, helping them to get settled and retaining them here in this province is an economic imperative for Ontario. This is especially important because within the next decade, newcomers will make up 100% of Ontario's net labour growth. To ensure that Ontario remains prosperous, we need immigrants for the skills and talents that they bring and for the richness that they add to the fabric of our society. In short, we need a steady stream of highly skilled, highly educated immigrants.

Let me say that Ontarians understand the importance of immigration. I want to refer to a recent poll that was published by Nanos in June of this year, where it asked Ontarians their views on various immigration matters. One of the questions they asked was whether immigration was a key positive feature of Canada as a country. The response of Ontarians was that a full 82% agreed that immigration is a key positive feature of Canada as a country. Furthermore, they were asked if immigration is one of the key tools that Canada has and should use to strengthen the economy. The response of Ontarians was that a full 70% of them agreed with that statement, that immigration is one of the key tools that Canada can use to strengthen our economy.

All of us in this House must join with our constituents, with the people of Ontario, and commit to helping our newcomers succeed. We can do so today by supporting this resolution. Together, we must call on the federal government to support Ontario's newcomers and to invest in their success and in their hopes and dreams. We must call on the federal government to recognize that Canada's success depends on a strong and competitive Ontario. Ottawa can do this by coming to the table and negotiating a comprehensive new immigration agreement with the government of Ontario.

The first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement was signed in 2005 for a five-year term. It expired in March of this year, and at that time my federal counterpart and I signed a one-year extension to allow for the negotiation of a new agreement. Well before the first agreement expired and in the six months since, the McGuinty government has repeatedly called on the federal government to live up to their responsibility to Ontario's immigrants. We've repeatedly asked Ottawa to begin negotiations—simply to begin negotiations on a new agreement because we owe it to our newcomers to help

them succeed. Still, the federal government has not yet set a date for negotiations to begin, and time is running out.

Ottawa's reluctance to discuss a comprehensive new agreement with Ontario has extremely significant implications for Ontario's immigrants and Ontario's economy. To strengthen Ontario's economy, all Ontarians must be at their best. Better settlement and integration of immigrants would add tens of thousands of skilled workers to Ontario's labour force and would increase productivity and income by billions of dollars. A new comprehensive immigration agreement with the federal government is therefore vitally important.

A new comprehensive agreement would allow Ontario to become a stronger partner in immigration policy and decision-making. It would be the beginning of a made-in-Ontario solution for services and programs for our newcomers.

Back in 2005, the federal government committed to spending an additional \$920 million over five years for settlement and immigration services in Ontario. When that agreement expired in the spring, we assessed the outcomes. On the positive side, the first immigration agreement infused an additional \$713 million into Ontario's settlement and integration sector. New services resulted, such as our Welcome Centres. New partnerships, especially with our municipalities, were created and strengthened.

It is important to note that during that same five-year period, Ontario also spent \$775 million on programs and services for our newcomers.

In the area of newcomer integration, the McGuinty government has made significant progress. We have a plan that's working for Ontario's newcomers, and the McGuinty government, as one example, led the way in 2006 with the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, the first legislation of its kind in Canada. Our government's groundbreaking legislation is breaking down barriers for internationally trained professionals who want to practise, as they should, in their field of expertise. Since then, other provinces such as Manitoba and Nova Scotia have followed Ontario's example by implementing similar legislation.

Ontario has also invested in bridge training programs. These programs are proving very successful. Since 2003, we have invested more than \$175 million in more than 200 bridge training programs. These programs have helped more than 40,000 newcomers put their skills to work in Ontario in more than 100 different professions. To give you a couple of examples, 80% of the participants in the construction management bridge training project at George Brown College found jobs within one year of graduation, and through the CARE bridge training program for internationally trained nurses, 90% of participants found a job within only six months of graduation. That translates, for that program alone, into almost 1,000 more nurses caring for Ontarians.

0930

At the University of Waterloo, a bridge training program for internationally trained optometrists has im-

proved the pass rate on their licensing exams from 37% to 87%, and after passing those exams, 100% of the participants are finding jobs as optometrists here in Ontario.

While these are impressive statistics, the successes achieved by the participants in these programs are truly inspiring. I'll just give a couple of examples. I met recently, a couple of weeks ago, an internationally trained veterinarian from Pakistan, Dr. Chaudhry, who immigrated to the Ottawa area. He struggled to find a job, submitting applications to Tim Hortons and gas stations, but finally, after several years and a number of attempts, he passed his certification exams in veterinary medicine and, with the help of a bridge training program funded by the government of Ontario through LASI World Skills' job match network, he found a job. He found a job working as a veterinarian in Ottawa, and he hopes that sometime in the next few years he will be able to open his own veterinary hospital.

Another example: An internationally trained early childhood educator was only able to find employment at a fast food restaurant after she arrived in Ontario, but within a year of starting her bridge training program she is now an Ontario-certified early childhood educator working in Ontario.

Lastly, an internationally trained civil engineer with 20 years' experience was unemployed. Through our bridge training program, he is now working as a structural engineer and is on the road to completing all of the requirements for licensure with Professional Engineers Ontario.

What's clear is that the McGuinty government's plan to help our newcomers is working. We are getting results. Our newcomers are benefiting from these results. But while we are making progress, we also recognize that there is much more to be done, and that is why the Canada-Ontario immigration agreement is so important to our newcomers' well-being and to their success.

While the first immigration agreement produced highly positive results for Ontario and for Ontario's newcomers, we must nonetheless remember that other federal-provincial immigration agreements have disproportionately benefited other provinces. For example, in 2009-10, federal government funding for newcomers was approximately 50% more on a per capita basis in Quebec than it was in Ontario. We don't think that's fair. It's not fair to Ontario and it's certainly not fair to our newcomers.

Ontario has a number of concerns about the current state of funding and settlement services and about decisions the federal government has made in the past several years. For example, the federal government has failed to spend \$207 million promised under the first Canada-Ontario immigration agreement. That's over \$200 million that could have been spent on employment training, language training and other settlement services, and when it comes to helping our newcomers succeed we all know that every penny counts. Ontario cannot afford to look the other way when Ottawa breaks its commit-

ment; we owe it to our newcomers. This agreement, after all, is about serving them, meeting their needs and helping them integrate quickly and effectively into their new home.

But a new agreement is also important to Ontario and all Ontarians, because Ontario's success depends, in a very real sense, on the contributions that our newcomers make to the province's economy and to the province's social fabric. Ontario needs a new comprehensive agreement that allows us to address the needs of our newcomers and the challenges that they face at the local level. We need a new agreement that eliminates duplication, closes gaps and reduces administrative complexity, all things that make it harder to serve our newcomers effectively. We need a new agreement that allows for language training and settlement services that are accessible to all immigrants, that are flexible, high quality, cohesive and results-based. We need, in short, an agreement that helps us better meet the needs of our newcomers. This is what our settlement agencies, our newcomers advocacy groups and our business organizations are saying to me. I heard this loud and clear just last Friday when I convened a Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, or COIA, summit and heard from more than 50 organizations as to how we can best serve our newcomers and help them succeed in Ontario.

For example, in the area of language training, there may be different rules depending on whether funding comes from the federal government or from the province. For newcomers trying to access these services, these kinds of administrative difficulties are a barrier to access. We believe that immigrants who have recently become citizens, as well as refugee claimants, should be eligible for language training programs. We don't want to have to turn newcomers away, like the federal government does, if they are Canadian citizens or if they are refugee claimants.

Ottawa has entered into bilateral agreements that better support newcomers in other provinces, namely in Quebec, in Manitoba and in British Columbia. The agreements enjoyed by these provinces give them much more say in decision-making, more say in administering funds and a greater ability to provide comprehensive, effective and impactful programs benefiting their newcomers. In fact, earlier this year the federal government renewed an immigration agreement with British Columbia which affirms that province's responsibility for the administration of settlement and language training programs. That is something that Ontario simply does not have, and yet Ottawa has shown little interest in sitting down and negotiating a comprehensive immigration agreement with Ontario, where almost half of the country's immigrants choose to live.

Furthermore, the federal government recently informed us that it is reducing spending on immigration services by \$53 million next year and \$59 million years after that. Ottawa's cuts to immigration spending deeply concern me, especially at a time when Ontario's immigrants have been disproportionately affected by the eco-

economic downturn, more than other groups in Ontario. During the past several years, the federal government has made a number of decisions that greatly concern the government of Ontario. For years, Ottawa's backlog in the processing of immigration applications has meant that highly qualified individuals and potential immigrants waited up to six years to get a response to their immigration application. Now, to its credit, the federal government attempted to fix the problem. Its goal was to reduce that backlog of immigration applications. The issue is that the fix created even more problems for Ontario. In 2008, Ottawa set up a list of just 38 occupations which it determined would receive priority consideration and processing. The new selection system allowed the federal government to reject most applicants on the basis of the federally—not provincially, but federally—determined occupation list. This system is not designed to meet Ontario's needs. An immigration system that only accepts skilled workers in a limited number of fields cannot possibly meet the needs of Ontario's complex, diverse and dynamic economy. This does not work for Ontario, because our economy depends on a steady and diverse flow of skilled immigrants.

The right way to reduce this backlog is to invest more resources in the processing of applications, not to close the doors on the federal skilled workers program. The impact of the growing provincial nominee programs in other provinces has also had consequences for Ontario. Although we support the efforts of all provinces to meet their own unique immigration needs and requirements, it cannot come at Ontario's expense. Those nominee "landings" through the PNPs come out of the already compromised skilled worker category, reducing even further skilled landings in Ontario and creating competition between provinces for highly skilled immigrants. Competing against ourselves is no way to compete against other global jurisdictions for the best and the brightest.

0940

Of course, the additional work required to attract and process these provincial nominee program applications comes with no funding and no resources from the federal government, and because these individuals get priority federal processing, our skilled backlog continues.

Today, Ontario is experiencing the combined effect of these federal government decisions. Today, less than one half of all newcomers coming to Ontario are in the skilled category, selected on the basis of our labour market needs. Over just the past five years, the number of immigrants admitted to Ontario in the skilled worker category has dropped by 42%. This, as we all know, has a significant and negative impact on the province's long-term well-being.

This economic argument, this, if you will, business case for diversity is one that Ontario's employers understand well. In communities like Hamilton and Brampton I've had the opportunity to meet with chambers of commerce and boards of trade, and have spoken to them about why immigrants, as they know, are so important to the future of Ontario. In this knowledge-based global

economy, they know that we need a labour force that has the education and the skills so that Ontario can lead, so Ontario can innovate and so Ontario can grow its economy and ensure that future generations have the best education and the best health care possible.

Today's economic reality means that the contributions of Ontario's talented newcomers will once again be called upon to add strength and vigour to our existing pool of skilled labour. But let's be clear: Ontario faces a growing shortage of skilled workers. The Conference Board of Canada predicts that this shortage will rise to more than half a million positions by the year 2030; that's 500,000 positions potentially going unfilled, and skilled newcomers are going to be essential to filling these gaps. So I can say without reservation that immigration and the diverse, highly skilled workforce that will result is an economic imperative for Ontario.

To capitalize on this economic opportunity, to be competitive in today's global economy, we need to get creative. We cannot allow the challenges of integrating skilled newcomers to stop us from embracing the enormous potential that they bring with them to Ontario. Skilled newcomers bring their own unique brand of international experience and they bring with them contacts and language skills to give Ontario businesses the competitive edge. Ontario's newcomers are the people who, if we open our doors to them, can open doors for us. After all, almost half of all new arrivals in Canada choose to settle in Ontario. Two out of three adult newcomers to our province arrive with post-secondary education or training.

The McGuinty government is using the opportunity of negotiating a new comprehensive agreement to press for a new partnership with Ottawa, a partnership that gives us an immigration system that better serves the local needs of our newcomers and, through it, improves Ontario's economic prospects. At the end of the day, Ontario's goal is to deal effectively with the significant demographic and economic challenges under way in the province. We all know that the sooner we have an agreement that improves services for immigrants, the better for our immigrants and ultimately the province of Ontario.

Ontario therefore calls on the federal government to commence negotiations immediately on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the funding, the planning and the management necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper. We call on the federal government to meet its obligations, to fulfill its promise under the first COIA agreement and spend the more than \$200 million that is still owed to Ontario's newcomers.

With this resolution today, this House is reiterating our commitment in no uncertain terms to Ontario's newcomers. We know that Ontario's success depends to a large degree on their success. We know fundamentally that our diversity is one of our greatest strengths. And we know that under a new partnership, a partnership that works for Ontario and that, most importantly, works for our newcomers, we can better serve our newcomers and help them succeed in Ontario, because when our newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise on the motion before the House today. Immigration, as members of the assembly likely know, is an issue very near and dear to my heart, as a grandson of immigrants from what was then Czechoslovakia. If elected Premier, I will be the first Premier in Ontario whose family directly immigrated to Canada from outside of the British Isles. That first is a testament to the amazing culture of opportunity that this province has offered immigrants from across the world, and particularly to those who came in the early to mid-20th century.

Through my grandparents and my own parents, I learned the values that helped to make them successful in their new home, that gave them the courage to leave the old country for a place where they didn't speak the language, didn't fully understand the culture, but knew that if they worked hard and played by the rules, they would provide a better life for their children and for their grandchildren. It wasn't easy. The only settlement programs back then tended to be hard hands and strong backs. My grandfather worked in construction, he worked on a farm, he worked in the lumber industry, he was one of the labourers who helped to build this province. He eventually then saved up enough money to bring the family across the ocean and set up a small business in Sarnia, Ontario.

But no doubt as we move into the 21st century, challenges faced by new Canadians today are difficult ones. The world is more complex. Rules around getting their credentials recognized and accessing the skilled labour market continue to build, and in spite of a lot of talk from the McGuinty government, these barriers have not come down. Today, newcomers need a variety of training to be full partners in the Ontario economy, to help address our looming skilled labour shortage, and most importantly to help them put their considerable energy, expertise and entrepreneurship fully to work and provide for their families. That means we need settlement programs that respond to the needs of newcomers and reflect the needs of Ontario communities both.

This motion is asking for more money to be spent in Ontario, but it doesn't say where, how or in what particular programs. It doesn't outline how the province will help the federal government to ensure money that is being spent in Ontario will actually produce the intended results. It doesn't even say what the results should be. This is why I have concerns—as my colleague from Halton said earlier on, a bit of the pot calling the kettle black.

Let's look at the McGuinty Liberals' record when it comes to immigration issues. In 2007, then Citizenship and Immigration Minister Mike Colle, the member from Eglinton-Lawrence, was forced to resign during the slushgate scandal, after the Auditor General found \$32 million was handed out to Liberal-friendly groups without an "open, transparent and accountable process." Sadly, when it comes to the McGuinty Liberal govern-

ment, it's not what you do, it's who you knew that counted. This runs absolutely counter to the values of newcomers who came to Ontario, who believed in a level playing field, a fair shake based on their skills, not based on their connections with a particular government.

I don't think anyone will forget the one particular example where the Ontario Cricket Association asked for a grant of \$150,000 and the McGuinty government doled out \$1 million in taxpayer funds. This money was handed out to groups who happened to know the minister personally, where they went to the right minister's fundraiser. In some cases, they didn't even have to apply for the cash; it was simply handed out.

0950

After months of dithering and delay and stonewalling—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Denying.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—denial, finally Premier McGuinty and then the minister himself acknowledged that the money was often doled out with little or no paperwork whatsoever. The spending controls on the grants, according to the Auditor General, were "the worst that we've ever seen." It's frightening. It runs counter to the culture of Ontarians. It runs counter to the culture of newcomers who want to call Ontario home to see that kind of cash handed out with no paperwork and no transparency, based on personal connections.

And now the McGuinty government is asking for \$207 million more to be spent but doesn't say when, where or how to spend it.

We want to help the province support programs for new Canadians. That's why I would like to propose an amendment, by removing the words "and the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding" and then "promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately," and replacing this with "and calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed plan including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the" and then "that was not applied for under the existing Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and will aid the province in commencing"—and I have copies of that for the Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Mr. Hudak has proposed an amendment, by removing "and the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding" and "promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately," and replacing it with "and calls on the

provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed plan including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the” and “that was not applied for under the existing Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and will aid the province in commencing”—okay.

Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So the motion would then read: “That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the provincial government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by promoting the investment in services for newcomers through a fully costed plan, including accountability and performance measures, which will allow the federal government to spend the \$207 million that was not applied for under the existing Canada-Ontario immigration agreement and will aid the province in commencing negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.”

If this motion passes, I believe it will help the province focus on what it needs for newcomers to best succeed in Ontario and it will help the federal government to also understand the programs it should be looking at providing.

You see, the present agreement with the federal government tripled the amount of money for settlement services in Ontario. As of March 2010, the total spending in Ontario on settlement programs and services since the COIA came into effect in 2005 was \$1.25 billion. But while the province of Ontario has seen new money for immigrant services, we have yet to make sure that the money goes where it is most needed or has measurable outcomes.

The Ontario PC caucus believes that accountability should be at the root of all government programs. For example, the provincial nominee program, since May 2007, has only attracted 722 nominees and their families as of March 31, 2010. It attracted 722 nominees in the last three years, yet this government prominently displays that they are targeting 1,000 nominees in 2010 alone, falling well short of their targets.

On OMNI TV in August, the minister said, “We think that program is just right.” I don’t understand why the minister is saying this program is right when they have fallen well short of their targets, and given the past type of slush fund that the McGuinty government has used immigration funds to advance. This is a pattern. Only an out-of-touch government would think that spectacularly failing to meet your objectives is just about right. When we see boondoggles like eHealth, which saw Liberal friends and consultants waste a billion dollars, we see clearly the need for greater accountability.

Eco taxes was a program whose partners didn’t even understand, and the government was forced to suspend it for 90 days because Premier McGuinty rushed it into place—another clear example of the lack of accountability. So it only makes sense that in the desire to create programs that are effective and actually help Ontario newcomers, we must include these types of accountability measures, and we need programs to promote economic opportunities for new Canadians.

In May, I introduced the Newcomers Employment Opportunities Act, 2010, to help Ontario lead again. If passed, the bill will lower the threshold for any immigrant investor who opens a business outside the GTA. It encourages better integration through tax incentives to employers who pay for English- or French-language training to new Canadians and it addresses the lack of transparency in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act and the regulated professions act, preventing newcomers from pursuing careers in their field of training, given all the red tape and walls they encounter under the McGuinty government.

New Canadians and newcomers I meet in their own communities and here at Queen’s Park tell me they are eager to have their skills recognized so that they can help unlock the true potential of our great province. They are entrepreneurs who want and deserve to enjoy the prosperity of a stronger Ontario. As Ontario struggles to recover from recession, a new generation of leadership must do more than the last to tap into the education, energy, skills and experience of the people we draw to our province.

When we deliver on our promises of a level playing field and fair opportunities for all to build a better life, new Canadians and all Ontario families will prosper. So I would ask all members of the House to support my amendment to the motion so that settlement programs will respond to the needs of newcomers, reflect the needs of Ontario communities and tap into the great potential of our province. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to speak to this motion and now, I guess, to the amendment to the motion, and I do so not being the child or grandchild of immigrants and not being someone who can trace their roots to places other than the British Isles or France, but I do so as a person who worked for the immigration department for some 20 years. I worked in Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver. I worked across the Maritimes and at Toronto International Airport before it was called Pearson International Airport. I worked helping to bring immigrants, I worked with students, I worked with people who wanted to sponsor their relatives, and for a time, I even worked deporting those bad ones who needed to be sent home. It was all part of the job and understanding about immigration. And what I say today I have said in this House before, and it has never been listened to, not by this government and not by the previous government. If Ontario wants to choose and to work with immigrants

and to help them in the best possible way, then Ontario has to do much more than what is being proposed here today. Section 93 of the British North America Act states that immigration is a dual responsibility. There are only two dual responsibilities: agriculture and immigration. That's why you see that there is a Minister of Agriculture in this House and in every Legislature across the provinces, and there is a minister responsible for immigration in this House and in every Legislature across Canada, and you have dual counterparts in Ottawa.

1000

But what this House has not seen fit to do, what this motion does not see fit to do, what this government has not done in the past seven years, what successive governments going on before them have not done, is to seize the opportunity to actually help and assist immigrants and do what is needed to be done and what they have the authority in law to do.

It's all well and good to look at the Immigration Act, and I still have my copies and it's not substantially changed, although the number may not be the same. But part VII-General of the Immigration Act states that the federal government must consult with the provinces. They must; they shall. It's mandatory. Whether we have this motion or the amendment to the motion, those consultations are going to take place in any event. I'm absolutely confident. They've done so in the past, they will continue whether or not this motion is passed, and the consultation will be ongoing.

There are also federal-provincial agreements that must be made and that the minister—and I will read the section of the act: “The minister, with the approval of the Governor in Council, may enter into an agreement with any province or group of provinces for the purpose of facilitating the formulation, coordination and implementation of immigration policies and programs.”

The minister in Ottawa must do that, and this motion and this minister here in Ontario wants to participate in that.

But everyone is missing the boat. Everyone is missing that what absolutely needs to be done is for Ontario to be a player, to be a leader. In 1978, the government of Quebec, through the British North America Act and the authority given to them, negotiated with the federal government for its own immigration program. Ontario, since 1978, has done none of that—32 lost years. While immigrants continue to come to this province in great numbers, we have done absolutely nothing.

The Canada-Quebec agreement on immigration—as I said, 1978: What this agreement allows the province of Quebec to do—and Ontario has no such authority, nor is it asking for the authority, nor has it ever dreamed of having the authority, nor will the \$207 million ever help the immigrants in a way that Quebec does.

This is what Quebec can do: Quebec can select its own foreign nationals. Quebec has immigration visa officers strategically placed throughout the world, in order to choose those immigrants who will best help Quebec. If they need something—as the minister said—if they need

doctors, lawyers, dentists, nuclear scientists, labourers, whatever they need, they get to choose them. They get to choose the right mix for Quebec. In Ontario, we never dream of doing that. The minister can talk about that, but the minister never does anything that will allow Ontario to choose those immigrants who will best prosper in Ontario and those immigrants who will contribute the most to the overall economic benefit of the people of this province. Quebec can do it. Does the minister stand up with a motion asking for permission or a law that says we can do the same thing? No.

What else can Quebec do? Quebec has the authority to make sure that every application for permanent residence is looked at upon its merits and that a selection certificate is filed with the Ministry of Relations with Citizens and Immigration, in a manner determined by the province of Quebec. They have selection criteria. They have their own grid system. If they are looking for people with university educations in a particular field, they can choose them. If they are looking for people with academic credentials, they can choose them. If they are looking for people who are trained in skilled trades, they can choose them.

But what they can do even more is that when they sit down with a prospective immigrant somewhere in the world and that prospective immigrant has skills and abilities, they can assess them on the spot to see whether or not those skills and abilities will be recognized in the province of Quebec. So an immigrant sitting down in Burundi—just to pick one country out of the 200 around the world—will know that, as a carpenter, those skills are wanted and needed in Quebec and that they have the necessary qualifications to be called into the trade. Or if they're a dentist or a doctor or a lawyer, they can come to Quebec and they can work. The visa officer will sit down with them and assess the application—knowing full well that that's what Quebec does—and tell them, “No, if you come to Canada, and particularly to Quebec, this will not be recognized, but you can take the following courses that we will assist you with,” so that the prospective immigrant knows not that they have to jump through hoops, not that they have to go around corners, not that they have to wait in line; they'll know precisely what is going to be expected of them before the application is even finalized. And should they agree they want to come to Quebec, they know when they get to the other end, the Quebec government has all of the programs in place to assist them.

Does Ontario do that? No. Is asking for \$207 million going to do that? No. Does anything in this motion or what the minister is trying to do help immigrants in the same way as if they were coming to Quebec? The answer is no. And that is a shame, because as the minister and as everyone keeps saying, 44% of all the immigrants who came to Canada last year came to Ontario. This is the magnet, this is the place and this is the province that chooses not to assist them.

To go on: Quebec has the authority to choose temporary foreign nationals; that is, people who come in for

a short period of time to do work, who are not expected to stay in the long term but who are necessary for carrying out the economic activities of that province. Does Ontario have that authority? No. Ontario doesn't have that authority. Ontario's not even asking for that authority. If we did have that authority, we could assist the tens of thousands of people who come here on temporary work visas and could assist them in integrating or applying to remain within the province if it is discovered that their work and skills are necessary. We do not have that authority, nor is the minister asking for it. But the British North America Act and the template of Quebec allow fully for it. Why is the minister not doing that? I'm flabbergasted as to why we talk this whole thing about immigration and then do nothing about it.

What else does Quebec do? Quebec has an entire law for the integration of foreign nationals. It has an integration program, a linguistic integration service, eligibilities, financial assistance, loan guarantees and deferment of loan repayment, all set out in the act. The government of Quebec, when it gets money from the federal government—as it does because it runs its own programs—gets countless dollars more than Ontario is asking for. That's because the federal government understands that they are not providing that service, that in fact the government of Quebec is providing the service. But does Ontario want to do that? No. The minister doesn't put forward that proposal. He doesn't talk about what can be done. What he asks for is \$207 million that the federal government is supposed to hand over willy-nilly to be spent on who knows what.

I listened to the Leader of the Opposition and I listened to this motion. It's not any wonder that the federal government is sometimes reluctant to hand over money to a province, this province, that has no clear idea of what it wants to do with it. It has authorities, it can set out laws, but all it wants to do is set out motions that ask for money. I am not surprised that there has been some reluctance on the part of succeeding federal governments to give Ontario the money. I'm not surprised at all, because they have to be accountable to the people of Canada, and they know that if they give the money to Quebec, it is all spelled out in law how that money is spent and Quebec is meticulous in spending it in ways that assist new immigrants and is absolutely meticulous in spending it in ways that bring credit to the province of Quebec.

1010

What else does the Quebec law do? The Quebec law also allows for the minister to make regulations and allows for the government of Quebec to do investigations, inquiries, to give out information, to supply identification documents—provides all of that. It provides for penal provisions if people break the act or the laws, and it regulates consultants. My God, don't you think this province should be doing that? Have you not heard of the horror stories of people going into unregistered and unregulated immigration consultants and getting bad advice? I had a man come to my office this

past week, a man from India, a man with enormous credentials, a man who was working very hard, a man who came here and claimed refugee status. He had tears in his eyes. He came with his friend, who said, "I don't know what made him claim refugee status from India." The man had tears in his eyes. He admitted to me that he had no refugee claim. As a matter of fact, he couldn't even fathom an Indian, from the world's largest democracy, having a refugee claim; he couldn't even fathom it. Yet he went to an immigration consultant who told him to make this bogus claim. Do you know how much money that costs? Do you know how much money that costs the people of Canada? That costs about \$10,000 per claim that is made, with virtually no chance of success. It cost him tens of thousands of dollars, paid to the immigration consultant, to make up a whole fabrication that ultimately was not successful. He came to my office looking for my assistance because he has now found a decent and honourable lawyer, who says, "No, you should never have done that in the first place. What you should have done is you should have made an application showing economic benefit to Canada." He is making a huge contribution to a company. They cannot replace him. They are paying him \$100,000 a year, as a person who is temporarily here, because he is absolutely skilled in what he does. But he, in all likelihood, is going to have to go back to India to make that application.

I asked him, is he afraid to go back? Of course he's not afraid to go back. The bogus refugee claim was just something that someone dreamed up, because this province allows it to happen. This province, in not getting into the game, in not providing the advice to someone who is here on a temporary visa, forces them into the hands of unscrupulous immigration consultants. I think we need to regulate them. The only way we can successfully regulate those consultants is by taking an act into our own hands. But does this motion do that? No, this motion doesn't do this. This motion perpetuates what has happened in the past: for this province to go to the federal government, whether it's a Liberal government, a Conservative government, a minority government, a majority government—it doesn't matter. You go there and you ask for money. But you don't ask for any particular purpose and you don't ask for any authority to regulate what needs to be regulated.

I'm saying to this minister, I don't know why the motion is before us. The federal government and the minister, the Honourable Jason Kenney, have a duty and an obligation, as set out in statute, to consult. He's going to consult whether this motion is passed in this House or not. He is going to consult with the minister and the ministry officials on the extension or change to the program. What is more important to me, and what is more important to the tens of thousands of immigrants who call Ontario home, is what is going to be negotiated, not that negotiations take place. And what is more important is Ontario seizing the opportunity to finally do the right thing; Ontario seizing the opportunity to help immigrants; Ontario seizing the opportunity to regulate un-

scrupulous practices; Ontario seizing the opportunity to do what Quebec has done and to have an immigration act that has some teeth, that has powers and authorities, the rights to choose, the rights to regulate, the rights to punish if people run afoul of it. That's what Ontario needs, and that's not what we're hearing here today. That's not what we're hearing at all.

I am profoundly disappointed, every time this subject comes up, when I think about those people who come to Canada, when I think about the five million people who came to this country in the 21 years that I worked for the immigration department—five million people. Go to Pearson International Airport. Go to the border points. Even go to a refugee-bearing ship and see the faces of those people as they get off from wherever they've come from. See the hope in their eyes. See the hope they have, not necessarily for themselves but for their children. See what they aspire to in Canada. See how we can help them. But see how we can help them in a way that does Ontario proud, not how the federal government can shuffle them off, not how the federal government can run years and years and years of backlogs on refugee claims, some of which—and most of which—are obviously not true.

Oh, I see my time—I will continue. This is another one of my bifurcated speeches. I look forward to continuing this on the next occasion.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. It being very close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: If my lovely wife, Joan, were in the members' gallery this morning, which she is not, I would want to wish her a very happy birthday.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I share something with the member from Essex. If my wife Karan was in the gallery today—but I know she's the vice-principal at St. Catherine school in Peterborough. Today is actually her birthday. Just for a historical record, she was born during the Kennedy administration and the last year of the Diefenbaker administration, just to put that into historical perspective.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today I want to welcome students and teachers from Cornell Junior Public School in the riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, the second half today.

Mr. Dave Levac: Today in the gallery on this side we have the family of page Caelan Meggs: mother Lisa, father Randy and grandmother Sylvia Meggs. We're awfully glad that they're here today to watch the proceedings and to watch their very large-statured son take over the page's place.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm pleased to introduce Keith Pacey, who's here today from North Bay, a mem-

ber of our North Bay Regional hospital board. They're proudly opening their new facility in December and he's here to watch proceedings. I'd like to welcome Keith.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): In the Speaker's gallery today, I'd like to welcome my brother Joe Peters, who was out giving blood again today. Good for you.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today Mr. Kuo-Jan Wang, director general of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Toronto, and delegation. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

SMART METERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. The Ontario PC caucus has uncovered documents that show that the Dalton McGuinty government was warned that his—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd remind the honourable member of the use of titles. I have allowed the term "McGuinty government," but I don't appreciate you using a first name, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: All right. Thank you, Speaker.

The McGuinty government was warned that your smart meters are broken, but the Premier is plunging ahead with his expensive experiment anyway. Premier, 21 energy distributors, including provincially owned Hydro One, said that the rush to make time of use mandatory by June 2012 doesn't give them time to fix all the problems with the meters, to fix bugs with the software to run them, and the inaccurately high bills they produce as a result.

Premier, 21 red flags were raised; why did you ignore them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague is a staunch defender of the status quo when it comes to the electricity system as it existed in 2003 but that's not something that we're prepared to accept, because that would be irresponsible.

He calls smart meters part of an experiment, but I will remind him that they are in place in BC, Quebec, a number of American states, the United Kingdom, Italy, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia and Ireland. In particular, I note that the previous Labour government in the UK committed to smart meters in every home by 2020, but the new Conservative government said, "That's not fast enough," so they accelerated the implementation of that very program by three years.

Around the world, people know it's a smart plan to put smart meters in our homes and businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, 21 red flags were raised by distributors across the province, by your own Hydro One,

but you give them the back of your hand. And it gets worse: The Ontario Energy Board, in a letter of August 4, acknowledged “a number of distributors express the view that the setting of mandatory” time-of-use “dates is premature and inappropriate at this time...” Your own Ontario Energy Board admitted that energy distributors “may encounter extraordinary and unanticipated circumstances during the implementation” of time of use, and said that “these matters need to be addressed.”

Twenty-one distributors—your own Hydro One, your own Ontario Energy Board—raised flags, but I guess Premier Dad knows best. Premier, how much do families have to pay for your mistakes when it comes to your smart meter tax machines?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague stands against smart meters. Ontarians should know what he stands for is the continuing use of coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. He stands against the Green Energy Act, which is about laying the foundation for a new manufacturing industry in the province of Ontario.

I want to remind my honourable colleague as well of something that the Environmental Commissioner said about smart meters. He said this:

“By reducing peak demand (which should come about through customers’ response to time-of-use prices), we avoid having to build more power plants and transmission lines....

“Going back to the same-old-same-old that did not work is not the answer.”

I could not agree more with the Environmental Commissioner.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier now twice has refused to answer the essence of the very clear question today. Premier, 21 energy distributors raised red flags, including your very own Hydro One. The OEB has similarly raised concerns about the accuracy, the bugs in the system, but you ignore them. And just like Premier McGuinty declared Saturdays as laundry days for the common people, you’re ignoring the concerns of distributors across the province about your broken smart machines, which are not only charging high bills but inaccurate bills as well.

Families today are struggling just to make ends meet. Why don’t you get that? Middle-class families are struggling to make ends meet, and you’re going through with these smart meter tax machines that are inaccurate and high-priced.

Premier, will you do the right thing? Will you suspend this program, give people a choice and get this program right?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we have a bit of an inkling of the Conservative Party plan for electricity in the province of Ontario. They are for coal; they are against smart meters. They are against laying the foundation for a new clean technology industry through green

electricity manufacture, production, transmission and the like.

I also want to remind Ontarians that the results of their reckless price freeze that they put in place when they were in government cost Ontarians \$900 million. I would also remind them that their “leave it to the next government to take care of it” approach left our kids and grandkids with \$20 billion in stranded hydro debt. That costs Ontario families \$60 every year because they refused to take responsibility to begin to build a clean, modern, reliable electricity system.

1040

SMART METERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. Premier, I don’t understand. You just don’t get it. Why won’t you simply say that the meters should be accurate? Why don’t you simply say—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will once again remind the members that if they want to have conversations amongst themselves, please allow the questioner and the person answering the courtesy to hear either the question or the answer. Those members who want to have a discussion with members on the opposite side of the House, please take those discussions outside of this chamber and do not interrupt the proceedings.

Question?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty just doesn’t get it. Where is the sense of leadership? Why aren’t you asking the questions? Why aren’t your meters accurate? Why aren’t the bugs being fixed? The last time you ran headlong down this course without asking the questions a Premier should ask, we got the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle that saw Liberal friendlies get fat and rich and Ontario families get nothing in return.

Premier, once again, just like with eHealth, you’re relying on computer technology that the energy industry says is not ready, isn’t reliable and is making families pay too much on their hydro bills. Why won’t you do the right thing, suspend implementation, give families a choice and fix your badly broken smart meter program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We’re not going to return to the generation of electricity by coal in the province of Ontario. My colleague remains firmly committed to that policy. That’s not one we’re prepared to accept. We’re not going to freeze electricity rates; that cost Ontarians \$900 million last time.

There is some hope, though. There is. Some people think that progressive conservatives no longer appear anywhere on the face of the planet. In fact, they’re in the United Kingdom, and this is what they had to say about smart meters: “The rollout of smart meters will ... help us meet” some of the “long-term challenges we face in

ensuring an affordable, secure and sustainable energy supply.”

Those conservatives in the UK understand. They understand in BC, Quebec, the US, the UK, Italy, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, Ireland and so many other places around the world. This is an important and integral part of an intelligent electricity plan that ensures that we have clean, reliable, affordable electricity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the PC caucus understands that after seven years, you’ve surrounded yourself with elite individuals to help you make decisions, that you’ve clearly lost touch with what is happening at kitchen tables across this province. Well, let me try to make this clear once more.

Premier, you’ve heard from energy distributors, you’ve heard from Hydro One, you’ve heard from Measurement Canada, you’ve heard from the Ontario Energy Board, and you should have heard from Ontario families that your smart meter experiment has gone dangerously off the rails. And if you’re not listening, I’ll tell you one more time: Families are telling you that your tax machines are defective. They can’t afford your outrageously spiking hydro bills, let alone your HST tax grab. Why don’t you call a halt, fix the problems and give every family a choice whether they want to participate in the program or—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Very, very soon my honourable colleague will have the opportunity to support a new and important measure that I spoke of earlier today. It’s our new energy and property tax credit. In particular, it will benefit Ontario seniors—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew: I warn you to come to order, then I sit down and you start again. I just ask you to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. I don’t need help again from armchair Speakers. What I’m trying to do is ensure that we have a good flow of question period, that there is an opportunity to question and an opportunity to answer. It’s very difficult for myself and our guests who are here in the chamber to hear the proceedings.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleagues will be very interested in and hopefully supportive of a new measure that we spoke of earlier today. It’s a new energy and property tax credit. It will be for the benefit of many Ontarians but especially seniors. In fact, two thirds of Ontario’s seniors will qualify for this new benefit. It maxes out at \$1,025. It’s a very real recognition on the part of our government that our seniors face special challenges when it comes to their property taxes and their energy costs. That’s why we’re moving forward with this particular initiative. We’re very proud to do so, and I would ask my honourable colleague

that, when the time comes, he lend his strong support to this measure that will help Ontario seniors.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know that Premier McGuinty boasts that he has a more intelligent understanding than Ontario families. This manifests in him having the gall to declare Saturday as laundry day for the common people. It’s why he lectures senior citizens to get up at 2 in the morning to do their laundry. That’s why he lectures people on shift work—to try to change their lives to fit what Dalton McGuinty defines as the right way to run a household. I think families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I just remind the honourable member again to use titles.

It’s not helpful to have somebody stand up to question and then the opposite side of the House start to heckle that member. Again, I just caution the members. I don’t want to start to name members for heckling. I think there are much more serious offences to start to name members, but I don’t want to get to the point of having to name members for heckling. I just ask that we, as much as possible, be respectful of one another.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, people are weary of your experiments in social engineering that are driving costs through the roof. We stand with that senior citizen whom you’re telling to wash their clothes at 2 in the morning. We stand with that family that is working shift work that can’t adjust to your smart meter tax experiments. We stand with that family with young kids that can’t have them all showered and ready for school by 6 in the morning, as Premier McGuinty wants them to do.

We believe in carrots; you believe in sticks. Won’t you do the right thing? Give families a choice, because not every family is how Dalton McGuinty wants them to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It’s not helpful to make personal attacks on your own members.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: For seven years now, we’ve been working long and hard on behalf of Ontario families. And yes, I would argue that we have a more intelligent understanding of families than do the Conservatives. I will not be ashamed of saying that.

Families’ priorities are unchanging, Speaker. They are the same today as they were when you and I were growing up. Families want good-quality schools for their kids. They want access to good-quality health care for everybody in the family. They want a strong economy that supports good jobs. And when it comes to the latter, the strong economy, they understand that an important part of that foundation is a reliable, clean electricity system. That’s why we’re working so hard together to put that in place.

So, no, we will not freeze electricity rates. They did that, and that cost us \$900 million. We'll not reopen coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. They did that, and that made our kids sick.

We understand families. They want good schools, they want good health care, they want good jobs and they want a good electricity system so that when they turn on the switch, it's there.

1050

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

I'm quite comfortable just to wait and let things drag on. I know it's a caucus day today, but it may be a little late arriving.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. No worries; I've told my caucus members that they can get their exercise after question period.

My question is to the Premier. For the last month, the Premier has insisted that electricity rates have to go up and that people who have a problem with it should do their laundry on the weekends. People have been speaking up loud and clear over this last month, and they cannot take it anymore.

So my question is this: Is the Premier finally ready to admit that he was wrong and that people need relief?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that, given the tone and the tenor and the goodwill that infused that question, my honourable colleague will be very supportive of the new measure that I just referenced. It's a new energy and property tax credit for many Ontarians, including three quarters of Ontario seniors. It is specifically designed to help Ontario seniors address some of their property tax challenges and some of their energy costs. This is a specific, practical measure that we are putting forward, and I would ask my honourable colleague if Ontario seniors will be able to count on her support for this very important measure.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All families, all households, are being hit and they're being hit hard by this government. They were hit hard by the unfair HST. They were hit hard by the smart meter boondoggle and sweetheart private power deals.

The Premier has ignored the pleas of Ontarians for a very, very long time. But now this mess is so big that he's finally scrambling to try to address it. We have a very simple, concrete proposal. Will the Premier take the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm afraid, on behalf of Ontario seniors, that my honourable colleague is not prepared to support their energy and property tax credit. But perhaps that is not surprising, because when we

introduced our new sales tax credit of \$260, they opposed that. When we introduced our personal income tax cut of \$200, on average, they opposed that. When we doubled the property tax grant this year to \$500, they opposed that.

When you add all those benefits up for Ontario seniors—the energy and property tax credit, the new sales tax credit, the personal income tax cut and the property tax grant—that's \$1,985 in benefits for Ontario seniors on an annual basis. In each and every instance, they continue to oppose that. You can't say you're in favour of doing things that help seniors with their costs and vote against these kinds of measures.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think that I'm very proud to have opposed everything that this government has done, and I would say the vast majority of Ontarians agree with me, as per the Toronto Star poll today.

Ontarians simply just cannot afford to pay any more. They can't afford to pay for more smart meters that simply don't work—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I say again that it is very helpful that members be respectful when somebody is speaking. I will make reference to the official opposition, to a member who just made a comment as the leader of the third party was speaking. The leader of the third party was respectful when your leader was speaking, and I just ask that, as much as possible, we try and tone the heckling down and let individuals ask questions and answer questions.

Please continue.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: They can't afford to pay more for smart meters that simply don't work. They can't afford to pay more to pad the profits of private power utilities or even public power utilities. They can't afford to pay more, period. That is the point.

When will we see a plan that will provide real relief for all Ontario families who very desperately need it? Will the Premier take the HST off of hydro today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think there was a telling slip on the part of my honourable colleague when she said that she doesn't support anything that we've done. I think that responsible opposition demands more than just continuing opposition. At some point in time, you have to put forward some positive, constructive policy proposals.

My honourable colleague says that she is concerned about prices that Ontarians have got to grapple with. But again, I want to return to a very specific, practical measure that will be before this Legislature very shortly. It's our new energy and property tax credit. It's valued at \$1.3 billion every year. That is real, meaningful support for over three quarters of Ontario seniors. The benefit can go up to \$1,025 on an annual basis to help them with their energy costs and their property taxes.

Again, I say to my honourable colleague, will she stand up in support of Ontario seniors by supporting that particular measure?

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. My office has been flooded with messages from families and seniors worried about escalating hydro bills, no doubt about it. Connie Falcone from the GTA writes this: “As a single mom, and no wage increase in two years, it’s very difficult to make ends meet. My latest bill increased by \$80”—perhaps the energy ministry would be interested in this. “This is too much for one person to absorb.”

Instead of a knee-jerk response that doesn’t help all struggling Ontario families, why won’t the Premier just take the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows that the HST is part of a comprehensive package of tax reforms. It’s accompanied by a personal income tax cut that my honourable colleague opposes. In fact, it’s accompanied by \$12 billion in cuts for people over the course of the next three years. My colleague opposes each and every one of those.

I want to remind her again of that very important report put out by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which I would commend to my colleague. The title says it all: Not a Tax Grab After All. That report specifically says that when it comes to low-income families, they come out ahead when you throw everything into the mix, middle-income families come out about the same and highest-income families come out a little bit behind. That’s a fair approach to dealing with some really important issues. That’s why we put that in place.

I would ask my colleague again to support specific measures that we bring to this House on a regular basis to help relieve some of the financial burden for families and seniors in particular.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier likes to conveniently forget that the authors of that report have actually said that they don’t support the harmonized sales tax. Nonetheless, all over Ontario, hydro bill concerns have been growing, and that’s what my question is about.

John Sauve from Val Caron writes: “I would like to see what he can do for us seniors about the hydro and the HST that has tripled on my hydro bill.” The NDP’s proposal would ease the concerns of people like Mr. Sauve by taking the HST off of hydro. Why won’t the Premier just agree?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It’s good to have an opportunity to talk about our plan, because they don’t have one. It’s also a good opportunity to refresh Ontarians’ memories with respect to what they did when they were in government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North and the member from Hamilton East will please come to order—Oxford as well, please, and Durham and Leeds—Grenville.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And Durham again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And Renfrew one and Renfrew two.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague is asking us to freeze hydro rates. We’re not prepared to do that.

I want to remind Ontarians of what they did when they were in government, because that’s always informative. They raised hydro rates by 40%. During their five years in government, they built no new electrical supply in Ontario—not one megawatt. They paid \$150 million to cancel Ontario Hydro’s lifeline with Manitoba. In fact—perhaps this is the most galling of all—they ended all conservation initiatives. Those savings would have equalled 5,200 megawatts by the year 2000 had we only maintained those that were already in place. That’s their legacy; it’s abysmal when it comes to electricity in the province of Ontario.

1100

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Until this Premier wakes up and realizes what’s going on out there today, I am going to continue to raise the stories that Ontarians are bringing to me, stories like the one that was shared by J. Paul Roberts from Kitchener, who says his hydro bill went up by 18% since last year—just since last year—and Maureen Cain in Ottawa, who got a shock when she opened her \$411 bill, and Earl Drozdowski in Acton, who saw an \$85 increase in his hydro bill and writes, “I received my hydro bill today and was floored!” These are real people today who want real relief.

My question is, when will the Premier finally start listening to them and do the right thing and simply take the HST off of hydro?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It’s never enough when it comes to explaining to Ontarians what it is we’re doing and why we’re doing it. I just want to remind my honourable colleague again of what we inherited here by way of electricity supply circumstances. We were in a terrible state. There were regular brownouts. We were at risk of a province-wide blackout. There had been no new generation or transmission built in a long time and the only plan put forward by the former government was to put in place diesel generators in the downtown cores of our cities. That was obviously irresponsible, untenable and unsustainable.

We’ve made massive investments in new generation and in new transmission. We’re cleaning up our air at the same time by shutting down coal-fired generation and we’re laying the foundation for an entire new industry of green electricity in the province of Ontario.

People know what has happened to manufacturing in Ontario. They know it’s under attack with the advent of globalization. They know we’re going to have to do something to move forward. An important part of our electricity plan is about laying that new foundation for new jobs in the manufacturing sector right here in Ontario, serving—

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

SMART METERS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. When it comes to your smart meter initiative, Hydro One and energy utilities warned you about computer software defects, Measurement Canada concerns and other problems that render inaccurately high bills that families must pay. Your crown corporation also warned you of capital cost overruns to install your smart meter tax machines in rural Ontario in time for your urgent deadline.

In another out-of-touch, Marie Antoinette moment, you said that you “acknowledge distributors may encounter extraordinary and unanticipated circumstances during implementation of time-of-use pricing.”

Just how much extra cake will it cost families to pay for your failed energy experiment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question. I want to go back to a report that I discovered called Energy for the Future. It was a report published in February 2006. In this report, it says the following—I think this is important—“We have to invest in conservation—to offset demand. We have to invest in demand management—to shift peaks in consumption to off-hours.” That’s what time-of-use is all about. I think we all know that. Guess who wrote this report? It came from a task force from the Progressive Conservative Party, chaired by the MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Also a member of that task force was the MPP for Mississippi Mills.

It’s very obvious. The Tories have done this from day one. When it comes to having to make the difficult—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Premier may think he has a more intelligent understanding than Ontario families, but his answers to the problems that utilities and families raise about so-called smart meters are simplistic. You’re following the same pattern as eHealth. Real and substantial problems with your expensive experiments emerge, but instead of fixing them, you laud the goal and the ideal, attack the whistle-blowers and ignore the problem.

Ontario families paid over a billion dollars for an eHealth system that is still not functioning. How much more will you make families pay when your latest experiment goes awry?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said before, in 2006 this very member stood and wrote a report in support of time-of-use meters. Today, as is typical of the Tories here in the province of Ontario, when things become challenging, they run and hide. They don’t have the courage to make the important decisions we need to make to ensure that we have a modern energy system in this province.

The same decision is being made in the United Kingdom. The same decision is being made in the United States. The same decision is being made in New Zealand. The same decision is being made in Australia. The same decision is being made in British Columbia. We are global leaders, and we’re proud of that. The rest of the world is following Ontario because we’re going to modernize—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It’s not helpful.

I would also remind the honourable minister of a former Deputy Speaker, Mr. Bert Johnson, who reminded that when the Speaker is standing, he’s the only one to be standing.

We are halfway through question period right now. I am starting to get sore ears.

I have guests who have just arrived from Elgin county, and I would like to see all members set a very good example for the Van Brenk family while they’re here.

New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: Every time Ontarians open another bill, they get the shock of their lives. Monday, it’s the hydro bill. Tuesday, it’s the property tax bill. Wednesday, it’s car and home insurance bills. Ontarians can barely keep their heads above water. Why does the McGuinty government always side with the powerful insurance companies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A party that raised insurance rates 53% has no business making those kinds of claims.

When it comes to families, will the member and his—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. We are halfway through question period. I’m going to warn members that as reluctant as I am about it, I will have to start naming members. Our guests need to be able to hear questions and answers.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Will the member and his party opposite support our energy and property tax credit for seniors, which will put more than a billion dollars into the pockets of hard-working Ontario families and our seniors?

Why did that member and his party vote against the northern electricity industrial rate, and why did they vote against the energy tax credit for northern residents?

Our plan is about building a stronger economy for our children. It is about creating jobs, and it is about ensuring that all Ontarians have a bright and prosperous future. It’s a plan that’s working.

It speaks volumes that that party—

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: On September 1, it was the McGuinty government that slashed auto insurance benefits. Accident victims are going to be forced to pay for rehabilitation out of their own pockets, and all this at a time of rising insurance premiums. Why has the McGuinty government caved once again to the powerful insurance lobby and abandoned Ontario drivers and innocent accident victims?

1110

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are getting rid of abuse in the system to save consumers money. The member opposite wants to stand up for large private health care organizations. He wants to ignore the reality. He doesn't want to tell the people of Ontario that our benefits across a range of benefits are equal to or better than everywhere else in Canada. As is typical of that member and his party—which promised public auto insurance but when they came to power killed it; which raised car insurance rates 53%—he doesn't want to tell the whole story. He wants to stand up for private health care delivery. He wants to stand against Ontario consumers.

That's why we've kept the price of insurance relatively equal over seven years. The people of Ontario see through you. They see through your party, and they'll give you a very strong message next year at this time.

SMART METERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Rising energy costs are certainly a concern in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. And one of the concerns I hear about is smart-metering and time-of-use pricing. The young families that I see and talk to in my riding are parents who are both working, they're coming home to spend time with their children, and for the most part they don't really get to the chores until after the kids are in bed. Hearing the opposition talk about doing laundry late at night as if it's something very unusual or the only choice that these parents have makes me want to ask the minister to explain to them what time-of-use pricing is, and also for my constituents.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for raising this important question. As she notes, time-of-use pricing is intended to encourage customers to shift their consumption off of peak use. Over time, that means less necessity for investment in expensive new generation and transmission to meet peak demand. The member may find it useful to know that, at present, under the time-of-use schedule over 82% of all hours in the week fall outside of on-peak times.

I know the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has some of the hardest-working farmers around in her riding, and they're working hard to adjust, of course, to time of use, and some of those farmers do need to run their farms at all hours. So I can understand the member's interest in time of use, and I can assure the member that we're working hard to ensure we have a very good balance as we move forward with this new initiative.

Smart meters and time of use are about modernizing an outdated, inefficient system and giving consumers options with respect to consumption as well as—

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

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to thank the minister for mentioning the fact that we need to upgrade our transmission system. That is certainly something that is very critical to the stray voltage issue for those farmers.

But there's also a misconception that time of use forces people to use energy—and intensive energy—at really unrealistic times, and there's also a sense that smart meters exist solely to enable time-of-use pricing. There's a notion that smart meters are an Ontario phenomenon and a one-of-a-kind experiment.

My question to the minister: In the experience of other jurisdictions, can you tell us what other benefits have been derived from smart meters?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is absolutely right: Smart meters and time of use are not just about the prospect of consumption management and providing people with a motivation to shift their usage to off-peak hours. That's important, but building a smart electricity grid is about much more than that. It's about helping local distributors pinpoint and respond more quickly to power outages. It's about providing Ontarians with more precise readings of energy consumption, doing away with estimates and on-site measurements. It's about new, efficient meters that do not have to be manually read, reducing the number of field visits local utilities have to make to read and service old meters. It's about reducing tampering and theft of electricity. It's about long-term environmental benefits as a result of load shifting, and it's about nurturing a culture of conservation.

Ontario is definitely a leader, but we're not alone. The United Kingdom, New Zealand, Ireland, Italy, Spain, France, Sweden and Australia, to name a few, are hot on the path—

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

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Premier. Here's a question Justice McMurtry won't answer because you deliberately left it out of the terms of his review: Why didn't Premier McGuinty announce the G20 law that affected access to a large portion of Toronto?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We received a number of real and I think very legitimate concerns about a very old law which served as the foundation for a measure that we put in place. We think that the responsible thing to do in the circumstances is to take a long, hard look at that law, and that's what we've asked Mr. Justice Roy McMurtry to do for us. We want to give him the time, and we've given him all of the breadth that he needs to take a look at this particular law, and we're very much looking forward to his advice.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: A pattern has developed where the Premier hangs public servants out to dry in order to make himself look good. You did it with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw that comment.

You did it with Kelly McDougald, formerly of the OLG. You left a cloud hanging over bureaucrats after the OPP raided three ministries and raided the Ontario Realty Corp. You're doing it with our valued police officers with the G20 law, which was your job to announce. The former community safety minister still has his limousine, and nothing in the terms of the McMurtry review will change that.

If you won't ask yourself the right questions, I will. Who is responsible for keeping the G20 law a secret from the public, and why did you feel the need to lie about it?

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm glad that the member mentioned this particular issue, because he would know that our Ombudsman has announced that he is going to launch an inquiry into very narrow parts of the G20 summit. One of the things that the Ombudsman is looking into is, first of all, the promulgation of the particular regulation and the communications around that regulation. I'm looking forward with great anticipation to the Ombudsman's report on that and the recommendations that flow from that.

We've also asked Justice McMurtry, a former Attorney General and a former Solicitor General in the Progressive Conservative government of Bill Davis, and an eminent jurist, to look at a law which in fact is many, many years old—it was enacted during wartime—to give us some recommendations on how that law might be changed and—

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

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. On September 10, two migrant agricultural workers, Paul Roache and Ralston White, died after exposure to toxic fumes while working in a closed vat at a farm near Ayton. Will the minister order an inquest into the deaths, to find out if the accident could have been prevented?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First off, let me thank the member for the question and her concerns regarding this tragic loss. I've had the opportunity to speak with the member in regards to this issue, and I think I speak for everyone in this chamber, in this House, when I say that we are all saddened to hear about this tragic incident. I

also understand how difficult a time this must be for those deceased workers' families and for their colleagues.

What I can say is that we want the answers. We want the answers to how this occurred, and that's why my ministry officials are investigating the specific circumstances about this case. Our first priority is to ensure that the Occupational Health And Safety Act was followed. When it comes to health and safety in Ontario, regardless of classification or status of a worker here, they are all protected equally. So our government—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The minister will know that under the current Occupational Health and Safety Act, there is no real protection for migrant workers. When a migrant worker raises a health or safety concern, such as one regarding dangerous conditions in a confined space at work, they can be immediately removed from the country by an employer wishing to silence them.

So I ask again: Will the minister take the right steps to address this and provide migrant workers with some protection? Hundreds of thousands of union members across Canada would like to know the answer.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Just to correct the record for the member, yes, farm workers are protected under the Occupational Health and Safety Act here in Ontario, and it was this government, in 2006, that made that happen.

1120

What I should note is that these workers do come to Ontario under a federal program, and I have encouraged and I have written to the federal government that they need to fix this program that is broken and flawed. That is something that I encourage the member also to do.

We are working closely to protect workers who work on farms. Under our government, what I can say is that we've doubled the number of health and safety inspectors. One hundred of those inspectors are trained on farm safety and are doing proactive inspection. That's under our government, and we've tripled the number of inspections and orders issued on farms—

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Energy. This past August, I had the opportunity to visit Atikokan, in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and announce our government's plan to convert the Ontario Power Generation plant in that community to burn biomass. I can tell the Minister of Energy that my constituents are excited to see that OPG's first biomass-fuelled power station will be located in northwestern Ontario.

The environmental benefits of shifting from coal to biomass are obvious, but for some people the economic implications may be less apparent. The Atikokan station is a critical part of the community, and a transition of this

nature is not a simple process, so my question to the Minister of Energy is this: What sort of economic impacts can the people of Atikokan expect to see during this conversion process and beyond?

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's through this member's leadership and tenacity that this landmark conversion is going forward at the Atikokan generating station and a whole new made-in-Ontario industry is opening up in the northwest. This member worked tirelessly to make that happen.

I can say that in addition to the OPG jobs that are being retained at the station to assist the conversion and subsequent running of the biomass facility, 200 construction jobs will be created in the interim, along with a 25-employee wood pellet fuel manufacturing plant that will be located nearby.

I want to share with you the words of the mayor of Atikokan when he summed up, I think, the feelings of the community in saying, "This is splendid news for Atikokan. We are very grateful to Bill Mauro, our MPP; the Minister of Energy ... ; and the entire McGuinty government for this great announcement. It shows that they really care about Atikokan and northwestern Ontario and we thank them very much for this."

These are exciting times for northern Ontario, and I know that my friend—

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I thank the minister for the compliment. I know that my constituents appreciate that OPG will be maintaining a robust presence in Atikokan, and the minister makes a good point about biomass and the job potential on the fuel manufacturing end of things. Certainly the prospect of having this kind of industry as a permanent tenant in the north, with the shift to cleaner forms of energy starting to take place around the world and the potential for export, is something I think the forestry industry would be very interested in.

Speaker, through you to the minister, have you looked at the potential for partnership with Ontario's forestry sector with respect to the manufacturing of biofuel pellets for consumption here and abroad?

Hon. Brad Duguid: To the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: May I also add my compliments to my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan for his determination and dedication—a remarkable job.

Certainly, I'm glad to speak about the new partnerships that are happening in the biomass and the forestry sector, and may I say, our government's forest sector prosperity fund has already helped substantially in this area. The fund was established in 2005 to stimulate capital investment and revitalize competitiveness in the forestry sector, and to date the program has disbursed well over \$34 million in grants to support these capital projects.

A very exciting example of how this program has supported green energy initiatives is the \$20.7 million that went to the AbitibiBowater operation in Fort Frances

for their biomass cogeneration plant: a tremendous project. Because of the funding provided for this plant, Fort Frances can generate enough green energy to power about 30,000 homes. This is great for the community, great for the industry—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John O'Toole: The question is to the Minister of Government Services. If we recap the recent history of financial blunders by the Liberal government, this is just a part list of what we'll find: millions wasted on eHealth, the eco tax, the HST and the failed smart meters. Further, over the summer we learned that the OPP raided some provincial ministries and are investigating so-called financial transaction irregularities. Now we've also learned of investigations of irregularities at Ontario Realty Corp.

Minister, since you're taking the lead on accountability for the McGuinty government, can you now assure the people of Ontario that there is no other bid rigging, fraud or kickbacks taking place at this time under your watch?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The member from Durham would like an answer to his question. I'm going to ask the minister to provide that, please.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: This is an interesting question. I just want to tell the member opposite that, to the best of my knowledge, there is no other information that I have available.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: That's a very disappointing response, Minister. The media reports that the alleged offences involved amounts estimated at over \$400,000. This is in the media that you and I should both be reading, but it appears that only I'm reading it. Who knows how much is at stake at the Ontario Realty Corp.? Yet there's not even a peep from your government about voluntary investigations into spending practices in your government—clearly from your answer.

Where is the accountability? Have they not learned anything from the eHealth scandal? How can the people of Ontario trust the McGuinty government, given its reckless spending, its multi-billion-dollar tax grab and its wait-and-see attitude to learning about the OPP investigation this summer?

Minister, when are you going to release some information on ongoing OPP investigations on fraud under your watch?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Clearly, the member knows that the police are investigating. The police will do their proper work, and they will eventually release a report. I think the member should have patience.

But I want to tell him that, on accountability, he has no right to give us any lectures, because they are the ones who have put—you know, they didn't want to disclose

any information under freedom of information; now he's giving us a lecture on accountability. We have actually made transactions more transparent. We have brought in more corporations under the freedom-of-information act. So, really, he doesn't have any right to give any lectures on that front.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Today, we learned that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable members know that there is a provision in the standing orders that if they are not satisfied with an answer, they can call for a late show. The minister has finished his answer. I don't need other members continuing to try and question the minister. So use the tools that are available to you, and utilize the late show.

Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again, to the Premier: Today, we learned that Horizon Utilities wants to raise distribution rates by 12% in Hamilton and St. Catharines. The ever-rising cost of hydro under this government, including the 8% HST, has Hamiltonians hurting from hydro shock.

Susan Surowaniec of Hamilton writes: "I am one of the unemployed in Hamilton and this could not have come at a worse time. We are struggling to make ends meet and all we get is take, take, take. When is someone going to give us something for a change?"

Why won't the Premier exempt hydro from the HST and give people like Susan a break?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm sure the member understands that Horizon Utilities has applied to the OEB for a rate application, which is what they do. We don't own Horizon Utilities; that's owned by the city of Hamilton and the city of St. Catharines. So if the member is trying to tie that in with our responsibilities, that's not unlike some of the things she tried to do last week, where the Ontario Energy Board soundly corrected the numbers that she put out.

But I think one thing she would want to share with her constituents in Hamilton is the good news that the Premier announced this morning for 740,000 Ontario seniors that are going to see an increase in tax relief—an increase in tax relief that's going to help some of those seniors address some of the challenges that come with rising energy costs. That's 2.8 million Ontarians who are going to see tax relief totalling \$1.2 billion annually. That's something that I think her—

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

1130

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hamiltonians are worried sick that they're not going to be able to pay their hydro bills.

Pat and Mike from Hamilton write this: "We are a family of five—two parents, three kids. We have never

had a hydro bill anywhere near to the one we just received—\$648. Thanks HST!"

Hamilton's Robert Marshall has this to say: "I am on pension. My wife and I stay up late in order to do our laundry when we can afford to do it! Nothing personal but McGuinty has no idea what he has done."

The Premier could make—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable members, notwithstanding the fact that she's reading a quote, of my ruling earlier.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier could make hydro bills more affordable today. They could do it right now by taking the HST off of hydro. Why is he refusing to do anything to help Hamiltonians and the people of St. Catharines?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Once again, last week the member opposite lost all credibility with numbers when she put numbers out to the public, to try to get a headline, that were 500% wrong—not double, not triple—five times wrong. That's something, I think, that she's going to have to look herself in the mirror—because that's not just a miscalculation; that's a gross miscalculation.

What I want to say is that this morning the Premier had some great news for Ontario seniors in Hamilton and right across this province: 740,000 Ontario seniors are going to see an increase in tax relief. Some 2.8 million Ontarians will see tax relief, totalling \$1.2 billion. That's an increase of \$525 million over the original 2009 property tax credit. That's good news for Ontario families, and in particular that's good news for—

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

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. David Oraziotti: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last month, you came to Sault Ste. Marie as part of your construction safety awareness campaign and visited the site where the new \$15-million Francis H. Clergue public elementary school is being built. As you saw, Minister, the construction workers at the site are taking safety precautions very seriously and the project is moving along smoothly.

In my riding, we're fortunate to have a number of other large and small construction projects under way, and I want to be sure that everyone working on these sites and sites across Ontario is just as safe as the workers you visited.

Minister, now that your construction safety campaign is finished, can you tell us what else you are doing to protect workers in my riding and across Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for bringing the construction safety campaign to Sault Ste. Marie. It was a great success, and I want to thank everyone from ridings across the province that I visited this summer to bring the message on-site.

This campaign is a call to action. It's a grassroots campaign—it's on the ground, it's with the workers, it's with the employers—and it highlights our workplace

safety message. A key component to the campaign was our toll-free number that allows the general public, anybody, to be able to call in if they see a safety risk on a construction site.

Further, if you go by construction sites across the province today, you will see vivid images and a message, and the message is: "Make sure that you are safe today so that can you go home tonight." We want to make sure that message is loud and—

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

Mr. David Oraziotti: Earlier this year, you also announced an inspection blitz focusing on fall hazards in the construction industry. Fall injuries account for about 20% of lost-time injuries, making them one of the leading causes of lost-time injuries in Ontario workplaces.

According to the WSIB, the average cost of a lost-time injury in 2009 was over \$25,000, and the cost to business is estimated at four times that. This doesn't take into account the human cost of a serious injury, which is immeasurable.

Minister, can you report back to the House the results of this safety blitz and what your ministry is doing to protect construction workers in Ontario?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Yes, the member is right: Following the campaign, we had a 90-day safety enforcement blitz that visited 2,800 Ontario construction sites. Inspectors continue today to have zero tolerance when it comes to violations of our Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations in relation to fall hazards. We're shutting down work sites where we see these violations occurring. In total, we have issued over 3,000 orders.

The top four concerns on construction sites are guardrails, non-suspended scaffolds, fall protection systems and worker training and records.

Safety is a shared responsibility between the workers, the employers, the government, the WSIB: everybody coming together to make sure that those workers get home safe and sound.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. On March 22, my office filed a freedom-of-information request with the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario. It's now been more than six months and we've still not received the requested documents. On August 12, the Higher Education Quality Council sent us a letter indicating the records were assembled. On August 18, we sent them a cheque. On August 26, they cashed the cheque, and on September 9, after we still didn't receive the documents, we wrote another letter asking where they are. There has been no response.

Why is the Premier withholding these documents and what are they hiding at the Higher Education Quality Council?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: As the honourable member is aware and as he's outlined, there's a process by which members can request information under access to information, and I'll certainly follow up on the concerns that he brought here today.

This gives me an opportunity to speak a bit about the Higher Education Quality Council, which is an organization that was brought forward as part of the Reaching Higher plan to advise government on moving forward in the area of higher education. I've been very impressed with the research projects they've undertaken and the advice that they have provided the government as we continue to strengthen our post-secondary education system. We have now 140,000 more students in our province's colleges and universities since we took office, and I think it's incumbent upon all of us to get the best advice and research on how we can make sure that the system continues to grow and is enhanced.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: The minister would know full well that we've requested these documents. There's something fishy. It doesn't pass the smell test over there.

The last time I got freedom-of-information documents from the education quality council we found out that the chair had bought a \$500 watch from Birks, and only after I raised it in the Legislature did he write a cheque to reimburse that. We also found out they were spending thousands and thousands of dollars on hospitality. So if you won't come clean, if you won't tell us what's in the documents or release the documents, we can only assume that the Higher Education Quality Council has joined the likes of eHealth, Cancer Care Ontario, Ontario Lottery and Gaming and the WSIB in squandering hard-earned tax dollars.

Minister, why haven't you ordered the council to release the freedom-of-information documents?

Hon. John Milloy: I indicated that I will look into the matter for the member. I would also indicate, in reference to his comments at the beginning, that the Higher Education Quality Council, as well as all agencies of that type, have adopted the new rules for expenses that were brought forward earlier this year by the government. Again, I reiterate the important work that has been going on with the Higher Education Quality Council.

Let me share with the honourable member some of the research projects that are ongoing right now with HEQCO: Aboriginal Self-Identification and Student Data in Ontario's Post-Secondary Education System: Challenges and Opportunities; Determinants of University Retention; Discovering the Benefits of a First Year Experience Program for Under-represented Students; and I could go on. I'm proud—

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

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you will know that your ministry is

undergoing a review of possibly closing a number of provincial labs around the province. Can you tell me categorically that you're not going to close the lab in the city of Timmins?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that we are working very, very hard to get the best value for every dollar we spend when it comes to health care. What I have to say is that we are looking at labs. I cannot speak to that specific case right now.

But I tell you, the people I talk to, when they think of health care, they think of our front-line workers; they think of our doctors, our nurses, our personal support workers; they think of people who actually provide care. So when it comes to the future of health care in this province, if we want a health care system that's here for our kids and for our kids' kids, we've got to look hard at every dollar we spend, and that includes looking at labs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, these are front-line workers. These are people who provide an essential service to our health care system across northeastern Ontario. That lab has been there for over 50 years. People in the city of Timmins, people in the region and the medical community have been using it for over 50 years. I ask you again a very simple question: Will you say today, right now, that you will not close that lab in the city of Timmins?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to let the House know that a review of the labs was conducted in 2007 by an independent consulting firm to assess the service delivery model when it comes to labs. In keeping with the recommendations of that review, the pilot projects are being reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

We are working with our partners. We are working with the hospitals, the LHINs and community lab providers. In cases where a collective decision is made to transition to a provincial community lab model, partners will work to ensure that that is seamless for patients.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity—seated in the Speaker's gallery today from the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London are Helen Van Brenk, Katrina Kalita-Van Brenk, Lisa Van Brenk, Hunter Van Brenk, Kaysee Van Brenk and Finn Van Brenk. Unfortunately, Helen's husband, Rein, and son Brian aren't here.

As many of you know—you'll remember, on the first day back of the Legislature, we had those wonderful Honeycrisp apples. The Van Brenks have a great fruit farm. But there's another really good new apple out there right now. Rein shared it with me at the plowing match; it's called a Silken. You've got to try a Silken apple as well.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to introduce John and Donna Henning who, via Chicago and other ways, in terms of connecting, had lunch with Dave, which is a program that I do for charity. They bought the charity dinner. They were here to watch question period. John is a student of politics in the United States and is fascinated by your role, Speaker. I thought I'd let you know that he thinks you are a pretty fair-square-deal guy in dealing in the House.

I wanted to introduce John and Donna, and thank them for visiting us here at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I wasn't about to rush that introduction.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SALMON SPECTACULAR FISHING DERBY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to tell you, I think you're a fair guy, too, just to get the story right.

I rise here today to tell my fellow colleagues and friends of a very successful fishing derby that was held in my riding last month. More than 50,000 people passed through the Molson big top tent at the 23rd annual Salmon Spectacular fishing derby, held between August 27 and September 5 on the waters of Owen Sound and Colpoy's Bay. It's one of the largest and longest-running fishing derbies in North America.

This year, virtually every day was filled with special events packed with activities for the whole family thanks to the generosity of 170 event sponsors. There were 3,000 registered anglers and daily prizes for the top 10 chinook salmon and top five trout.

The derby is put on by the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association with the help of hundreds of volunteer members and volunteer sponsors. I would especially like to recognize the work of three co-chairs: Fred Gebhardt, John Ford and Bill Douglas.

The crowds keep getting bigger every year. This year, Team Murdoch served over 5,000 hungry friends at the giant fish fry. The festivities ended with \$150,000 in prizes given away to our best anglers.

All the money raised for the Salmon Spectacular goes towards fishing conservation projects, which include a volunteer-run fish hatchery at Weaver's Creek that rears rainbow trout, brown trout and chinook salmon.

I invite all of you to come up to Owen Sound in 2011 for a great time and to support an important community event. Here's a picture of a couple of us at it.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Last Friday evening, I was part of a gathering at the University of Toronto Native

Students' Association gardens with a number of constituents and supporters who were very concerned about the treatment of Chile's indigenous Mapuche people.

Today marks the 79th day of a hunger strike by 35 Mapuche prisoners in southern Chile. Most of them are chiefs and leaders of Chile's indigenous population, people protected under the International Labour Organization convention 169.

The Mapuche demands are clear: the right to a fair trial; an end to the application of military justice; an end to the use of both military and civil trials for the same offence; an end to the violations of ILO 169, which Chile signed in 2009; and an end to the violence and torture targeted at the indigenous Mapuche. These demands are not unreasonable. Citizens of democracies worldwide expect no less of their governments.

I urge all MPPs and citizens to voice their concern, to contact the ambassador of Chile at echileca@chile.ca and demand that President Piñera of Chile respect his country's ratification of ILO 169 and recognize the rights of the Mapuche people.

BIOREM

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I recently had the pleasure of announcing the McGuinty government's continuing support of innovative business in Guelph.

Biorem is a clean tech company that designs and manufactures biological systems that remove odours and contaminants from the air. Through the innovation demonstration fund, the McGuinty government is investing \$1.2 million to help Biorem develop new technologies that remove volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, from manufacturing or municipal air exhausts. Biorem will be using the funding to install an industrial scale demonstration VOC treatment system at Polycon Industries in Guelph. Polycon is seeking a more effective process for removing the VOCs produced during manufacturing from their plant's exhaust.

The biotechnology developed by Biorem produces as little as 5% of the greenhouse gas emissions of traditional solutions and lowers the plant's operating costs by more than 40%. Biorem estimates the global market for its biotechnology is more than \$1.5 billion and meeting this demand will generate 37 Ontario jobs over five years.

Last year, Biorem also received \$1.2 million in funding to develop biologic solutions for waste water treatment. I'm—

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

KAREN GLEDHILL

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to commemorate the life of Community Living Ontario president Karen Gledhill, who passed away earlier this summer after a battle with breast cancer.

Karen began her volunteer work with Community Living Cambridge after the birth of her two sons. She later went on to serve as that board's president. As a

parent of a child with a disability, Karen understood the important role that families play in supporting their children and brought a parent's perspective and passion to the job.

In 2006, she joined Community Living Ontario as a volunteer regional director, and in this role she facilitated ways for local associations in the region to build stronger ties with each other. Karen went on to become the president of Community Living Ontario, running unchallenged in 2009. She was elected for a second term this past May, a sign that her leadership was endorsed by many.

Karen was a proud voice for social inclusion, human rights and dignity for those with intellectual disabilities. Karen was passionate, and she often spoke out against the harm and disruption that individuals with an intellectual disability experience as a result of striking workers picketing their homes. As you know, in May I tabled a private member's bill that would prevent picketing outside of supportive living residences.

Karen's family and Community Living were very lucky to have a person with Karen's spirit of volunteerism, perseverance and dedication in their lives. Thank you, Karen.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. David Ramsay: I'm very pleased to report to the House that Minister Gravelle and I, on September 10, officiated at an opening of a brand new gold mine in Matachewan, just west of Kirkland Lake. There are going to be 600 construction jobs over the next two years there, followed up with about 265 mining jobs for what was reported to be 15 years. Now, another five years of gold reserves have been discovered there.

This is incredible news for this area. It's going to mean economic benefits for Kirkland Lake and area, but probably as important, the Matachewan First Nation has a wonderful relationship with Northgate Minerals, whose mine this is, and are afforded, through an impact benefit agreement, an incredible opportunity for entrepreneurial activities, training and employment directly at the mine. Many of the First Nations were there, were employed on that day. That bodes very well for our area, and we're very pleased to see that.

1510

I was also very pleased to make an announcement on behalf of the northern Ontario heritage fund for an amount up to \$900,000 to the Matachewan First Nation for road improvements from the reserve to Highway 66 to facilitate all those economic activities that the Matachewan First Nation will be benefiting from.

This is such a win for the area. I'd like to thank the minister for his help with the project and his support and wish everybody well there. We're looking forward to that development.

CANADA 55+ GAMES

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise in the House to commend the remarkable job the city of Brockville did on behalf of all

Ontarians as host community for the 2010 Canada 55+ senior games from August 23 to 28.

This year marked the first time that the event, which began in 1996, had ever been held in Ontario. The games organizing committee put together an impressive bid to secure the games, and I have nothing but admiration for how enthusiastically the organizers, municipal councils, businesses and every citizen embraced the challenge.

But I'd like to take a moment to congratulate the medal winners from Leeds–Grenville and also a couple from Lanark county. In Brockville, the Brockville Magedoma hockey teams, with players from across my riding, won gold in the 60+ and also 65+ categories.

In swimming, medalists were Doris McEwan from Brockville, Casper Haupt from Brockville, Muriel Carlyle from Brockville, Allan Merpaw from Elizabethtown and Edward Bellam of Portland.

In track and field, the winners were Gerd Sollondz from Brockville in men's discus, 100 metres and shot put, and Dave Poth from Prescott in the 200-metre and 400-metre, long jump and 4x100-metre relay.

In golf, Harriette Peterson of Smiths Falls won a gold medal.

In badminton, Leo Thibault of Smiths Falls with Jack Powell from Perth won gold in doubles.

In tennis, Terry Kennedy of Brockville was a medallist in men's doubles with Jim Murphy of Merrickville and in mixed doubles with Edna Reilly of Athens.

In shuffleboard, the husband and wife duo of Mary and Arnold Mueller of Brockville also won a medal.

The approximately 1,500 athletes who competed at these games set an example to people of all ages about the value of keeping fit and taking part in healthy competition that challenges the mind, body and spirit.

THUNDER BAY MARATHON

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last Sunday, September 19, I had the pleasure of participating in the first Thunder Bay marathon, Miles with the Giant. The race was a loop course on what I think is a stunning track. There was a full marathon, a half, and a 5K run and walk; 835 participants took part in this inaugural event that began in the downtown north core, up Court Street to Boulevard Lake and into Centennial Park and back.

Our city has an incredible reputation for hosting world-class events in many different disciplines. Just this summer, the World Junior Baseball Championships were held in Thunder Bay, and it was such an incredible success that the organizers have been asked to consider applying and hosting it again.

The Miles with the Giant marathon was no different. Their tremendous organizing committee was led by president Barry Streib, who was supported by 200 incredible volunteers.

Congratulations to all participants, with a special nod to the women's overall marathon champion, Thunder Bay's own Nicki Wilberforce, who had a great time of three hours, two minutes, on what I considered to be a

very tough, challenging, hilly, but, in my opinion, a very fair and a very beautiful course.

As part of the marathon expo, Dick Beardsley provided an inspirational speech about his famous and extraordinary Boston Marathon duel 30 years ago with Alberto Salazar.

Thunder Bay has an incredibly active and robust running community. Miles with the Giant now has an opportunity to become one of the signature events on the running calendar, and I was pleased that our government was able to support this inaugural event with \$120,000 of support. Thank you to all those who contributed to an incredible day.

PETERBOROUGH LAKERS

Mr. Jeff Leal: For some, the number 13 is an unlucky number, but for the Peterborough Lakers lacrosse team the number 13 is a very lucky number. On Friday, September 17, the Peterborough Lakers won their 13th Mann Cup lacrosse championship. They defeated the New Westminster Salmonbellies in game six of the Mann Cup series with a score of 15-9. This victory was made more poignant because the Lakers dedicated their season to the memory of a great friend and a fan of lacrosse, Mr. Barry Larock. Barry was an assistant general manager with the Lakers and an employee with the city of Peterborough. This past June, Barry, at age 45, lost his battle with cancer.

The Peterborough Lakers, as a tribute to Barry, played not only to bring the Mann Cup home to Peterborough and the thousands of faithful fans who supported them, but they also played for Barry's love of the game.

Many don't know that the first indoor Mann Cup was played at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto in October 1932. This is a sport with a long history in Canada and a strong tradition in my hometown of Peterborough.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Peterborough Senior A Lakers lacrosse team for their hard work and commitment to the sport of lacrosse, to their fans and the residents of Peterborough, and on winning the cup in the 2010 series.

We all look forward to next season's Lakers show.

TENNIS TOURNAMENT

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Between August 18 and 28, the 100th annual National Capital Tennis Association tournament was held at the Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club in the great riding of Ottawa Centre. The Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club itself is coming up, in 2011, on 130 years in our community, and I look forward to celebrating that with them next year.

It is fitting that NCTA would choose this club to hold the centennial championship matches for Ottawa's tennis players. The first city championships were played at the Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club in 1910, organized by the National Capital Tennis Association. Awarded then were the Sir Percy Lake Trophy for men's

singles, as well as the Dr. F.C. Hanna and Birks trophies for men's doubles.

This year, the city champions were Rachel Cruikshank in ladies' singles and Galin Nizortchev in men's singles. Ladies' doubles was taken by Ms. Cruikshank and partner Elaine Douglas-Miron, and men's doubles was taken by Mr. Nizortchev and partner Matt Sherman.

The National Capital Tennis Association has 25 member clubs around the Ottawa area, from Manotick to Carleton University, Almonte to Orléans.

Congratulations to the champions, the NCTA board—especially president Sean Sweeney—OTLBC president Ron Stein, and all the staff and members from the various clubs who helped with the tournament.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated September 28, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENHANCEMENT OF THE ONTARIO ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT FOR SENIORS AND ONTARIO FAMILIES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DU CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT DE L'ONTARIO POUR LES COÛTS D'ÉNERGIE ET LES IMPÔTS FONCIERS À L'INTENTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES ET DES FAMILLES DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts pour mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENERGY AND PROPERTY TAX CREDIT

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am pleased to stand before the House today for the introduction of the Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act, 2010.

In the 2010 Ontario budget, we announced our intention to convert the Ontario property tax credit into the Ontario energy and property tax credit. The proposed legislation not only fulfills that commitment but also enhances our support for seniors and Ontario families.

First of all, our proposed energy and property tax credit would include an increase of \$525 million compared to the 2009 property tax credit. This means we would deliver more than \$1.3 billion in annual support to 2.8 million low- and middle-income Ontarians.

The bill also increases the reduction thresholds for seniors, many of whom live on fixed incomes, so that 50,000 new senior families and singles will now be eligible for the credit. In total, 740,000 senior families and singles would benefit from these enhancements and receive, on average, an additional \$93 each year.

1520

As we all know, seniors have worked hard and helped build the province that we enjoy today. With this proposed tax credit, we are making it a little easier for them by putting money back into their pockets to help manage their home energy costs and property taxes.

To target relief to those who need it the most, the proposed energy and property tax credit will be income-tested. Ontarians who own or rent a home would be able to receive up to \$900 in tax relief, with seniors able to claim up to \$1,025 in tax relief. Ontarians who do not pay property tax or rent, but still pay for home energy—those who live on a reserve or in a long-term-care facility—would still be eligible for tax relief through the energy component of the proposed credit. Ontarians would be able to apply for the Ontario energy and property tax credit starting with their 2010 income tax returns.

Going forward, the tax credit would be paid quarterly, like the new Ontario sales tax credit. This means that Ontarians will have access to the money when they need it and not have to wait until the end of the taxation year to apply to get it back.

The proposed tax credit is part of the five-year Open Ontario plan, which supports job creation and enhances the programs and services that Ontarians value, including education, health care and skills training. It also supports our budget commitments to help Ontarians with their home energy costs and property taxes.

This credit builds on the tax cuts that came into effect in January, which have lowered taxes for 93% of Ontario income tax payers. It is also part of a package of tax credits we have recently introduced, including the

proposed children's activity tax credit, which would help families keep their kids healthy and active; and the new northern Ontario energy credit, which helps northerners with their energy costs.

The Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act, 2010, would provide 2.8 million Ontarians with more than \$1.3 billion to help pay for their household expenses. That's why I ask for the support of the House in passing this act.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Finance's statement on the introduction of his new bill, which is an act to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit for seniors. As we know, that was in the Ontario budget last March. I'm a little surprised they didn't just include this in the budget bill in the spring, although it's fairly obvious why. As we get closer to an election, with about a year to go, it seems like every bill we see now is a tax credit. They figure they can get more political bang for the buck by having these individual bills for individual tax credits. It's interesting that they have taken on this new strategy with just a year to go to an election.

We go back a few years. We look at what has taken place. This government has taken so much from Ontario families. Look at the first budget this government brought into effect. What did they do? They cancelled the seniors' property tax credit before it was able to take effect. That was the first year, 2003. Seniors would have had seven years of tax credits—which they cancelled—if they hadn't done away with that. In their first budget, they cancelled the seniors' property tax credit. They increased corporate taxes by some 27%, from the planned reduction down to an 11% tax rate up to 14%. They cancelled the small business tax reductions. They added all kinds of new taxes.

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, they cancelled in the north. Funny how they're just bringing back some tax relief for the north through the energy credit. But in their first budget they did away with the reduced tax zone for all of northern Ontario that Ernie Eves had brought into effect. Then, having cancelled all these tax reductions in their first budget and subsequent budgets, they started bringing in big tax increases. So in 2004 we had the health tax, which was just a huge tax on Ontario families. Over \$15 billion has now been collected through the health tax.

More recently, of course, we've had the HST come into effect July 1. That's going to be an additional 8% that all families are paying on electricity, on heating oil, on gas for their car and on many, many other things. The government brought in the new eco tax, which I have to say I've certainly heard from lots of constituents in my riding about. Now they've backtracked on that one, and they've said they've taken, I think, a 90-day reprieve on that one. They'll bring it back in some way that likely the taxpayers won't see, it would be my guess.

On the energy file, everybody needs tax relief because we've seen so many increases, and I'm sure all MPPs are

hearing from people in their riding: the HST, as I mentioned, plus 8%; the recent Ontario Energy Board 10% increase; the green tax for programs, some \$50 million added onto the bill; the recent implementation of the smart meters. People are paying for the cost of the smart meters, but then we're also hearing from all kinds of constituents around the riding that you get the smart meter put in, it's not even turned on and suddenly the next month your hydro bill goes up significantly. That's a story we're hearing across the province, and that's before the time-of-use part of the hydro bill gets turned on, where you're going to be paying greatly higher rates during the day and the only way you will be able to save money is if you wash your clothes on Saturday or in the middle of the night.

So we've seen this long list of tax increases and burden to Ontario families and the cancellation of tax reductions at the very beginning of this government's time, and now all of a sudden, with a year to go to an election, it seems like every separate bill is a tax credit. Certainly, this bill was just introduced, and we will be looking at the bill. We did have a property tax credit back in 2003 that was in effect from the past PC government, so we're certainly in favour of reducing the tax burden that has been so greatly increased by the government. So we will certainly be looking at it and considering it. Any tax relief at this point is something that families absolutely need at this time in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, it's very clear somebody is polling. When I go door-to-door in my riding and talk to people, I have to say there's no question that seniors feel hard hit; they feel hard hit by property taxes, and they feel hard hit by their electricity bills. When I saw this bill coming forward, I thought, "Yes, it's that time." I can feel the clock ticking towards October 2011. Someone, in their plan, has realized they have to have another piece that they can put in the campaign literature.

There's no question that seniors are feeling the burden from downloading. Even George Smitherman, a former Deputy Premier who used to reside in this chamber, is talking about \$100 million from the province to balance out the books for the city of Toronto in his own fiscal plan. Whether the tender mercy will be there or not, I don't know. We will see. But the burden on the city of Toronto and other municipalities across this province is substantial. They feel it. When you poll, when you talk to citizens, you can see that seniors need this kind of relief. But I want to say that we in the NDP—and my guess is members right across the spectrum in this House—have heard from families and seniors about their skyrocketing hydro bills. People see their bills rise substantially even when they take measures to try to control their energy use.

What is driving these costs are policies that take the least efficient and effective way of dealing with our hydro needs in this province.

1530

Every one of this government's decisions about hydro adds nickels and dimes to people's hydro bills—a

decision to go forward with another nuclear refurbishment; a decision to build the transmission lines that are necessary for those refurbished nuclear power plants; the decision to put in smart meters at a cost that is extraordinary; a decision to let private electricity companies make even more money out of the people in this province; the decision to let gas utilities take even more profit out of this province—and means that people’s standard of living is under siege. They feel it. This bill acknowledges that and acknowledges that there are substantial policy failures, decisions about the future of this province that are hurting people and that have to be ameliorated by the government in order to salvage something in time for the next election.

When you take all of those decisions about electricity investment and then you add on top of it the underwriting of a corporate tax cut with the HST added onto people’s expenses, you get a very bad mix that makes it difficult for people to hold together their household finances.

I don’t disagree that Ontario seniors need a break, but I would say to you that all Ontarians need a break on their hydro bills from the policies that this government has been pursuing.

This plan won’t provide immediate response or help for seniors. It leaves them on the hook for hydro bills that are shooting up. McGuinty’s proposal leaves out other families who are struggling to make ends meet.

At \$500 million, a cancellation of the HST on hydro bills would help families in this province tremendously. That’s the direction that this government has to go in. Our proposal, the NDP proposal, to take the HST off hydro bills saves the average family with two or more children about \$135 a year. They need that; they need that kind of relief.

Some quotes from people—I see my time is short, but just one or two quotes from people who have written in:

“It is totally unfair to be hit with higher prices per kilowatt hour as well as the HST tax on our hydro bills.

“Chuck and Clara Zizzo.”

“I just want to voice my opinion on the hydro increase and the HST. First off, I am one of the unemployed in Hamilton, and this could not have come at a worse time. We are struggling to make ends meet.

“Susan Surowaniec, Hamilton.”

PETITIONS

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I want to thank Amy Preston from my riding for providing it to me.

“Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

“Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a

well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

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

“That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians affected with MS.”

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

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of constituents from my riding, in particular Ron Baker, who is a grandson of a home child. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

“Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

“Whereas, due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada’s British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario’s economy and prosperity; and

“Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

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

“Enact Bill 12, a private member’s bill introduced by MPP Jim Brownell on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day.”

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

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I’d like to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseth for sending me these petitions.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

“Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

“Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

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

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I certainly will sign that petition.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here entitled "Save Ontario's Independent School Bus Operators." It's a lengthy petition; I will not read it all. But the school bus operators are saying:

"Whereas the outcomes of the RFP pilot projects have proven that local bus operators will lose their routes in an RFP process based on price first and quality second; and

"Whereas the experience in other jurisdictions has proven that, while there may be short-term cost savings to an RFP process, in the long run the process reduces competition and costs eventually go up...;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned Ontario parents, students, community leaders, education professionals and business owners call on the Ontario government to address the concerns of the Independent School Bus Operators Association (ISBOA), abandon the RFP process, and adopt a process that ensures small and medium-sized school bus companies continue to be able to do business in" this province.

I agree with the petition and will hand it to page Noor for the table.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada; and

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bio-artificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bio-artificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to Brigid.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's still about HST. It's from people from Chatsworth, Leith, and even from Saugeen First Nation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I've signed this and I will give it to Megan.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas violent crime and gangs have been a problem in our communities; children require safe schools and safe streets in order to thrive;

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

"To continue with their support of the gangs and guns program;

"To continue to recognize the importance of a strong and educated police force;

"To continue to support rehabilitation programs;

"To continue to keep education as a top priority; and

"To continue to make our streets and schools safe places to be."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Audrey.

TAXATION

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

"Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

1540

"Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

"Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

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

"That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario."

I want to thank the council of the town of New Tecumseth for sending this petition to me.

CHRONIC CEREBROSPINAL VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here for the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it's for the funding and approval for CCSVI diagnosis and treatments.

"Whereas, even though health care institutions in Ontario have the equipment and expertise, those MS patients who have been diagnosed with blocked veins in their neck (CCSVI) cannot receive the necessary treatment in Ontario; and

"Whereas many of the MS patients with CCSVI, at great personal expense, have had to seek treatment in other countries such as India, Poland, Bulgaria, Italy and the US, the provincial government still has not authorized the procedure, which is angioplasty, an already approved procedure since the early 1980s; and

"Whereas not all people diagnosed with MS have been found to have CCSVI, and not all people who have CCSVI will have been diagnosed with MS, CCSVI treatment should be authorized and treated on its own merits, regardless of any MS issues; and

"Whereas numerous testimonials of exceptional post-treatment improvements in the quality of life for patients, accompanied by detailed presentations by vascular surgeons" to the Ontario government, the Ontario government still has not yet approved CCSVI treatment;

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

"That the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health, must immediately approve and fund all diagnosing and treatment of CCSVI by qualified Ontario health institutions."

I agree with this petition and will sign my name to it and give it to Brigid for the table.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

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

"That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector."

I have affixed my signature as I am in complete agreement, and give it to page Nick.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: As you know, a lot of people are upset with the harmonized sales tax, and I have another petition from people in my area. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I've signed this and will give it to Christopher.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

"Whereas almost 12,000 Ontario citizens who have an intellectual disability are on waiting lists for residential supports;

"Whereas another 7,000 individuals are waiting for other supports;

"Whereas 80% of the 1,500 parents providing primary care for their adult children waiting for residential services are over the age of 70;

"Whereas the government of Ontario made a commitment in 2007 to provide a 2% base funding increase to agencies providing developmental services every year up to 2010-11;

"Whereas the government has decided not to provide the 2% funding increase promised for the current year;

"Whereas the failure to honour this funding commitment will cause further deterioration of supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability;

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

“That the government of Ontario reinstate the 2% base funding increase promised four years ago to service providers in the developmental services sector.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's is a petition from the good people of Alliston and the town of New Tecumseth.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of the province of Ontario has entered into an agreement with the government of Canada to implement the harmonized goods and services tax; and

“Whereas the majority of Ontario taxpayers are opposed to the implementation of this tax; and

“Whereas the HST will add 8% to many goods and services where currently only the 5% GST is charged and will result in increased costs for all Ontarians and may create financial hardship for lower-income families and individuals;

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

“That the government rescind its decision to implement the HST in Ontario.”

I will sign that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Brue-Grey-Owen Sound.

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

“Whereas the residents of Ontario feel that this government has let them down on many different things, especially in high taxes;

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

“That the McGuinty government immediately resign and call an election.”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have a sneaking suspicion that that was a petition that has not been approved. Did it have a stamp from the table?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would remind the honourable member that the standing orders are very clear that petitions to be presented in this Legislature must be first vetted by the table and have the seal of approval on them, and I would just remind the honourable member that subsequent petitions presented in this chamber need to be approved by the table.

The time for petitions has ended. Orders of the day.

OPPOSITION DAY

SMART METERS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinty govern-

ment to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program. That's addressed to the Minister of Energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day number 1. Debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The motion just read by the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is an important step to help Ontario families who are struggling to manage their household budgets in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. I want to thank our energy critic, the Ontario PC House leader and member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for bringing this important matter forward. I know he will be debating this later on.

As you know, families across this province are leaving their hydro bill on the kitchen table for days and days on end—

Mr. Jim Wilson: They're afraid to open it.

Mr. Tim Hudak: They're afraid to open it up, as my colleague from Simcoe-Grey says, because they know the bill is only heading in one direction, and that is way up. When they bring this forward to the Premier of the province, what kind of advice does he have for them? Well, in an extraordinary Marie Antoinette moment, he says, “Let them do their laundry on Saturday”—a shocking headline in the Ottawa Citizen a couple of days ago about Premier McGuinty declaring Saturday to be laundry day for the people in the province of Ontario.

1550

Ontario families are weary of Premier Dad's experiments and his social engineering, which are driving their hydro bills through the roof. So the Ontario PC caucus has tabled this motion to stand against the out-of-touch Premier and his Liberal government and stand with the senior citizen who can't abide by Premier McGuinty's decree that she should get up and do her laundry at 2 in the morning. We're standing with the shift worker who can't adjust his or her schedule to fit in with Dalton McGuinty's vision of what an ideal household should look like. And we stand with that family with young kids who can't have them all up and showered and ready for school by 6 a.m. in order to beat the clock of Dalton McGuinty's smart meter, as this Premier wants them to do.

We take a very different approach. Where Dalton McGuinty wants to beat everyone over the head with sticks and higher costs, we believe in carrots to incent people to adapt to prices in the marketplace. We believe in incentives; Premier McGuinty believes in higher prices. Dalton McGuinty believes in telling Ontario families what to do; the Ontario PCs believe in giving Ontario families a fair choice. It's a choice between using time of use or not, depending on the family's preferences, senior citizens who are home, shift workers, the reality of families with young kids across the province—a reality that, sadly, Dalton McGuinty has lost touch with after seven years in office.

Here's what my colleague the energy critic's proposal in the motion seeks to do. Our proposal is to halt the

program, fix the problems that Premier McGuinty was warned about and then offer a real choice of regulated rates for Ontario families who are unable to live in Premier McGuinty's ideal home. Let us not forget that these smart meter tax machines were originally supposed to save all of us money. Premier McGuinty twice said—in April 2004 and in May 2009—that his smart meter experiment would lead to lower energy bills. His former lieutenant George Smitherman, when he was energy minister, said in February 2009 that hydro bills would only go up about 1% per year. We now know that those commitments, those promises, would in no way resemble the reality of hydro bills that would come down the road in the fall of 2010.

Eventually, the truth did come out. In January, a spokesperson from the Ministry of Energy pulled the lid off of the social experiment when she said that smart meters are more about creating awareness of energy use rather than helping people save money. That is why we need real choice, choice between a time-of-use rate that would actually give incentives to use power at off-peak times or a choice of a regulated rate, depending on what will work for that individual family. It's the same kind of choice that's going to be offered in British Columbia, which is not making time of use mandatory, the same kind of choice that exists in California, Florida, New York, Illinois and other jurisdictions that have brought in time-of-use pricing. But they understand, unlike Dalton McGuinty, that families need a choice, so time of use is not mandatory. We believe we should do the exact same thing here in the province of Ontario and give families that choice.

As you know, other jurisdictions like Victoria in Australia took the time to fix installation issues to get it right and to protect consumers, to encourage conservation and stand up for low-income families who were hit hard by this kind of initiative. These are jurisdictions that have found ways to balance hydro system upgrades with conservation goals and the ability of families to balance their own budgets. But not here in Ontario. Here, the Premier's only fix is to have us do our laundry during the weekend or in the middle of the night.

I should say that it's not only the Ontario PC caucus that is saying that there is an issue with smart meters, which Dalton McGuinty has turned into nothing more than tax machines on families across this province; the McGuinty government was warned that the smart meters were broken, but the Premier has plunged ahead with his expensive experiments anyway. Twenty-one energy distributors—some of the biggest in the province, as a matter of fact, including Hydro One—warned the Premier. They raised the flag that the rush to make time of use mandatory by June 2011 wouldn't give them time to fix all of the problems with the meters, that they couldn't fix bugs in the software to run them and the inaccurately high bills that they would produce as a result. Even Premier McGuinty's Ontario Energy Board acknowledged in its own letter that "a number of distributors expressed the view that the setting of manda-

tory TOU dates is premature and inappropriate at this time...."

The warning signs over the extra costs are already out there as well. According to a recent article in the *Financial Post*, the cost of getting smart meters up and running in Ontario could reach \$10.3 billion when all is said and done—\$10.3 billion on the backs of retirees and families in the province through higher hydro bills.

So what we are asking is very straightforward. It is very clear; it is fair; it is the right thing to do. Experts warned that rushing into mandatory smart meters would produce tax machines and errors and a pricing system that can be fraught with dangers and unintended consequences. We saw the warning signs, we've heard the damage and we've talked to families right across this province, but sadly, that has not pierced Premier McGuinty's bubble here at Queen's Park.

The Ontario PC caucus is calling on the Premier to do the right thing: to pause in the smart meter initiative, to fix the problems, to get it right and to make sure that time-of-use rates actually encourage conservation, not the tax machines that he's turned these things into.

Secondly, for the sake of families across the province who are struggling to make ends meet, for families who cannot adapt their lifestyle to Dalton McGuinty's ideal home, to give them a fair choice: to choose between time of use or a flat rate depending on their individual circumstances, their town, their city, the size of their family. It only makes sense. Those who can conserve will, but those who can't make ends meet need a chance to catch up. They need a break, and we know that if they spend the money in the local economy, they'll help to create jobs again.

I do hope that all members of the assembly will support this motion standing in the name of our energy critic to halt the program, to fix it and give a fair and reasonable choice to Ontario families: whether they want to participate in this program or not. Why won't you give them that choice, Premier?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm really pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this motion and pleased that the opposition has brought it forward. Let me tell you why: because it quite simply demonstrates that when it comes to energy issues, the Leader of the Opposition and the Tory party are just as short-sighted, just as confused and just as lacking in competence today as they were seven years ago, when they brought Ontario's energy system to a virtual state of collapse. The Leader of the Opposition didn't have it then and he doesn't have it now.

Ontarians remember those days. They remember what we call the Dark Ages in energy in the province of Ontario: the days of unreliable electricity powered by dirty coal; the days of increasing demand for power and decreasing supply; the days when eight years of Tory neglect left our energy system in absolute shambles. No, the Dark Ages in energy in Ontario weren't 1,300 years ago, they were seven years ago.

Needless to say, Ontario's weak, unreliable, dirty and outdated energy system in those days was in serious need of an upgrade. At the distribution level, the metering technology was ancient. Some of those meters had not been changed since our neighbourhoods throughout the province were built. They've been in place for 40 to 60 years, some even older. That was not an uncommon situation. Local distribution companies would find out about damage and power outages only when a customer called them about it. The people of Ontario deserve a modern, reliable, cost-effective electricity system, not energy infrastructure that belongs, frankly, more on a Leave It to Beaver set than it does on the side of your house today.

1600

We've made great strides since 2003 in stabilizing the system and working toward that goal. We're investing in new, cleaner supply and in updating our energy infrastructure, from our meters to our nuclear plants. We've made investments to support upgrades of over 5,000 kilometres of transmission and distribution lines which bring clean, reliable electricity to our homes and businesses.

We're modernizing our infrastructure that rests closest to home: the metering system. We're modernizing it because we need it. They're old. The Tory resolution and the Tories' position is to replace our old, outdated meters with old, outdated meters and technology. That's just plain foolish. Why would we not want to move forward with modernizing our energy infrastructure system? Why would we not want homeowners and businesses across our province to have modern energy technology—modern, updated, smart technology that's going to lead to much better advantages in our electricity system and better advantages for those consumers as well? An efficient smart-metering system will generate real benefits for Ontarians in the long run and will provide tangible results for Ontarians in the short term as well.

Today, over 4.1 million smart meters are in place to help make our system more efficient and effective. The rollout of smart meters in this province is going forward on time and on budget, and that's something we're very, very pleased to be able to say.

Smart meters mean better customer service. They're helping electricity distributors pinpoint and respond more quickly to damage and power outages. They're providing Ontarians with more precise readings of energy consumption, doing away with old estimates and on-site measuring, and doing away with the days when people had to knock on your door and go down into your basement to look at your meters.

It's time to move into modern times, modern ages. The technology is there to help Ontario families work together to build a better energy future in this province. The Tories don't want to go to those days. They live in fear of modernizing our infrastructure; they live in fear of moving forward with a modern energy system. They want to take us back. Ontario residents don't want to go backwards. They want to keep Ontario in front. They want us to keep moving ahead.

Smart meters are giving consumers the information they need to make the choices that they want to make to manage their energy usage. By enabling time-of-use pricing, smart meters will encourage consumers to shift their usage away from when the economic and environmental costs of providing electricity are at their highest. We encourage consumers to shift usage from peak hours so we can minimize or avoid costly investments in new generation and new transmission. It's just the smart way to run our system. It's really just the most intelligent way to move forward, working arm in arm with the people of this province to ensure that they have a modernized meter system, a modernized energy system that works much better than the old technology we had before.

Smart meters are also a key asset in developing a smart electricity grid in Ontario, one that can more readily bring new renewable energy online. Together, smart meters and time-of-use pricing deliver benefits for individual consumers and for the provincial electricity system as a whole. By the summer of 2011, our goal is to have 3.6 million customers on time-of-use pricing.

Ontario has become a global leader in modernizing our energy infrastructure, and as such, we have indeed received international recognition. We've had representatives from countries around the world—from BC Hydro here in Canada, from Australia, Japan, Russia—who have come over to look at how we are the best in the world as we roll this out. But we're not the only ones that are engaged in this, nor are those countries that have come to visit us. The United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Ireland, other countries—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Name them. Don't just say "other countries."

Hon. Brad Duguid: All kinds of countries around the world are getting involved in this initiative because, pure and simple, it's the modernization of our energy infrastructure.

Let's look to the United Kingdom, where the new Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron said this about smart meters: "In energy and electricity terms, this is like going from analog television ... to digital television where you have an enormous amount of choice and interactivity."

Prime Minister Cameron's government likewise put out a prospectus that set an ambitious goal, and it noted, "The government is committed to every home in Great Britain having smart energy meters, empowering people to manage their energy consumption and reduce their carbon emissions.... The rollout of smart meters will play an important role in Great Britain's transition to a low-carbon economy, and help us meet some of the long-term challenges we face in ensuring an affordable, secure and sustainable energy" supply. It's good to see that there are still some progressive—and I stress the word "progressive"—conservative governments in the world, if not here in this province.

In the United States, President Barack Obama has likewise expressed the need for grid modernization using smart meters as the way to do it, and he spoke of the

opposition in his country to this by saying, “It’s a debate between looking backwards and looking forward; between those who are ready to seize the future and those who are afraid of the future.... And we refuse to believe that our politics are too broken to make the energy future we dream of a reality.”

President Obama was right. It is a debate between moving backwards and moving forwards. It’s a debate between those who are afraid of the future, like our friends across the aisle, the Tories; afraid to move forward to modernize our energy system; afraid to make the decisions that we need to make to build a strong, reliable, clean energy system. They want to go backwards. They want to go back to where we were in the Dark Ages of energy in this province. They want to go back to where we were seven years ago, when we had a weak, unreliable, dirty system relying on dirty coal and impacting our health and impacting the cleanliness of our air.

We’re not going to go back there. Ontarians have worked too hard, we’ve come too far, we’ve done too much together to turn our backs on that brighter, that stronger future now. If we work together, we will continue to be a leader around the world, one of the best—we’re out ahead of the rest of the world and we’re darned determined to ensure that Ontarians remain there. I thank you for the time to be able to participate in the debate and I look forward to hearing what others have to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I’ve got to say, in response to what I just heard from the Minister of Energy, that this underscores a theme that has run through this chamber from the moment I walked in here in November 2007, and that is, if we don’t do it in the Liberal way, we’re either doing it wrong or we’re against it. If you bothered, sir, to read the motion that we’re debating today, what you’d find is that we’re not against smart meters at all. What it says is we want to freeze the installation of smart meters until such time as they are proven to work. And we’ve heard plenty of admission from that side of the House—from the government side of the House—on the fact that they don’t work at this point. So don’t characterize the Progressive Conservative Party as being anything but for the people, the people who are going to have to pay the price of machines that, as of this point, are indeed nothing more than tax generation machines.

The main message that we get from the McGuinty Liberal government on an ongoing basis is that we have to make sacrifices these days. That’s why we have these great big deficits that you people are racking up. We have to make sacrifices.

If you’ve ever been a dad, and most of the males in this chamber have been dads—we understand sacrifice. We call the Premier “Premier Dad” as a nickname for a reason: because he asks for us to see the world in that way. We don’t see the world in that way. Sacrifice is a legitimate thing to do, but there’s no way that this side of the House is going to sacrifice on the basis of how money

is being managed on behalf of the citizens of Ontario by that party.

The sub-message: “If you don’t support our legislation, you’re somehow or other anti-Ontario.” That is patently untrue. I would cite by way of example a couple of things: the Green Energy Act, which we debated last year. I could say an awful lot about the Green Energy Act, but I have limited time. The Green Energy Act: Either I voted for it or I was somehow against green energy. Not true. The pesticides act a couple of years ago: I voted against that act, but I’m not against the protection of our children, and that’s what I was told at the time I was by voting against it.

If I go on, the Water Opportunities Act, which has just gone to committee after second reading: I’m against that as well, but not because I’m against clean water. I’m against legislation that’s just brought in by the Liberal government of the day, and that’s the difference between the way we are characterized on this side and the way you present what you present as “Our way or the highway.” My message is quite a different message. My message is: If it looks like manure and it smells like manure, it’s either Liberal rhetoric or it’s manure.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would ask you to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw.

The point we’re trying—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Yes, you saw the program too.

The point we’re trying to make is that Ontario families, as the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party pointed out in his opening remarks, are afraid to open hydro bills.

I want to read into the record—I have several of them; many of them, indeed—but one letter that I got from a Thornhill resident on this subject. I quote from Ralph:

“As yet I don’t have a smart meter but my best guess is that it will add 20% as we are in our mid-seventies and not inclined to get up at 2 a.m. to do the laundry or dishes and also not inclined to buy new clothes and dish washers with delayed startup timers when our current appliances work just fine. The point of this note is to advise that today PowerStream sent us a letter increasing the monthly instalment from \$194 (which they set themselves from historic data) to \$378 per month for the next six months. Upon calling I found some was catch-up but a significant portion was the inclusion of the HST and the 12.9% rate increase.”

That is about smart meters and the other things that you’ve been piling on. You’ve got to understand why we’re asking for a freeze, and you’ve got to understand why we’re asking for a choice, and you’ve got to understand—because you read the newspapers as well as we do—that that is no more than any citizen of the province of Ontario wants us to call for right now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to speak to this motion brought by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on the smart meter time-of-use billing.

I've reflected on the thinking behind this motion and indeed the thinking behind the whole Tory position on how to manage Ontario's energy needs. As far as I can figure out, what we've got here is a four-point PC energy plan. Point number one is to do nothing about the situation and just run our energy system into the ground. Point two is to burn coal and have a whole lot of dirty, unhealthy air here in the province and all of the nasty things and health issues that that gives rise to. The third point in their plan seems to be to ignore all forms of renewable energy, and that flies in the face of thinking throughout the world. And I suppose the fourth point of their plan is merely just to stand over there and hoot and howl and blame Liberals.

But what is the reality of the member's thinking behind his motion? Let me just put something into the record here. I have before me a document entitled Building Ontario's New Foundations: Energy for the Future. The date of that document is February 2006. It's the energy platform for the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. I note that on page 6 of that document, in the introduction, they lay out three issues that they refer to, and they say, "We have to," and they lay out, "We have to do three things." Interestingly, the second thing is, "We have to invest in demand management—to shift peaks in consumption to off-hours." That's exactly what we're doing here and that's exactly what the member opposite's motion is attacking now. So I ask myself: What is really going on in policy circles with the official opposition?

However, there are other thoughtful people and thoughtful public officials who have thought deeply about this subject. Let me just start off with a quote from Gordon Miller, who is Ontario's Environmental Commissioner. He, of course, has developed a reputation for calling things as he sees them. What did he say in a September 16, 2010, blog post with respect to the smart meter policy of this government? "I am going to start off by congratulating Premier McGuinty...." Number two, he says, "I am confident that as we gain experience with" time-of-use "prices, we can find the optimum spread between peak and off-peak prices."

This initiative that we've introduced on the time-of-use pricing is in some ways something that we're working through. It requires some fine-tuning, and as the Premier has said, we are going to see that this time-of-use pricing works.

Let me just parse the actual motion that the member opposite has brought. It reads as follows: "Mr. Yaka-buski—That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinty government to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program."

It's very interesting that they do see the need for, the strategy behind and the intent behind this, because the motion is supportive of the program.

What do some other folks have to say about this time-of-use-billing smart meter? Let me quote from the CEO of Newmarket Hydro. I think that's up there in the North York area. A member opposite—

Interjection.

Mr. David Zimmer: What does he say? "The introduction of smart meters in Newmarket builds the foundation for new advances in the way we use electricity. The old saying 'you can only manage what you can measure' has never been more apt. The introduction of time-of-use pricing in Newmarket over the past 18 months has seen consumers begin to shift consumption from weekdays to weekends, reducing the strain on the electricity system and the impacts of electricity generation on the environment with no disruption in lifestyle."

What do they say in Aurora, Barrie, Markham and Vaughan? Brian Bentz, who's the president and CEO of PowerStream, which services that area, says: "Ontario is seen as a world leader in smart meter implementation. Visits to PowerStream's head office from energy officials representing other markets, seeking our expertise as they design their own smart meter programs, is a testament to our province's leadership in this area. PowerStream continues to be a strong supporter and advocate of the provincial government's smart meter initiative and recognizes it as being a key component to further developing Ontario's conservation and demand" system.

I have a very interesting quote here from a prominent Tory—in fact, a prominent Tory Prime Minister, one David Cameron in the UK. He said, back on January 16, 2010, "The government"—that is, the UK Tory government—"is committed to every home in Great Britain having smart energy meters, empowering people to manage their energy consumption and reduce their carbon emissions."

The Prime Minister of Ireland, Brian Cowen, on June 14, 2010: "Here in Ireland, we believe that smart grids have the potential to benefit a variety of players in the industry," effectively "managing household consumption more effectively. The government target is to put 21,000 smart meters in Irish homes this year alone."

I have similarly supportive quotes from the Minister for Climate Change in Australia and from the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment in New Zealand.

The point of my introducing those quotes from other countries and other jurisdictions, and the quotes from the heads of Newmarket electricity and Vaughan, King, Aurora and so on, is to point out that other jurisdictions have huge challenges managing the same issues that we do—England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand—and that local municipalities like Newmarket, Aurora, Vaughan, King, Markham and so on have serious local challenges as well as national challenges. We, of course, here in Ontario have serious provincial challenges to manage our electricity delivery system.

1620

The point is that all serious policy thinkers recognize the value in smart meter time-of-use billing. And for the

member opposite, in his motion, to attack this initiative that all jurisdictions, all serious policy thinkers, all serious politicians support is in many ways disingenuous. I say it's disingenuous when I reflect back on the 2006 Ontario Progressive Conservative energy platform policy, Energy for the Future, because what they were saying to the people of Ontario then was, "If you elect us in 2007, one of the first things we're going to tackle, one of the first things we're going to do is invest in demand management to shift peaks in consumption to off-hours." This is exactly what the Minister of Energy is doing. You should be supportive of this initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was interesting listening to the members of the Ostrich Party across the way. I call them the Ostrich Party clearly because they have their heads buried somewhere.

Here is a—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I ask you to refer to the party by name and member.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes.

Anyway, here is a sensible approach taken by the official opposition to fix a problem that is evident to us all. I am absolutely confident that every member in the Liberal benches has heard the same complaints that we have in our constituency offices, where people's bills are unexpectedly and without justification doubling and tripling at the oddest—and without justification. What does this Liberal Party do when faced with a problem? Well, they make it into a political game, a partisan game, instead of actually fixing or even addressing the problem.

I think it's clear in my estimation, in my view as a electrician, that the Liberals are much like electricity: not only are they shocking in their approach to politics, but they also take the path of least resistance all the time. They never will actually do any work if there's another route where they don't have to do anything. That's what they're doing on this opposition day: They're choosing to abandon the people of Ontario. Instead of looking at the faults and the failings that are with this program and helping people, they sit on their seats and they create political, partisan footballs out of really important subjects.

I'll just give you a couple of indications. These are calls that I've received at my office. Here is Linda Stewart from Smiths Falls. She operates a business in Smiths Falls. Her hydro bill has gone up last month to \$1,200. Her delivery charge is \$479, the regulatory charges are another \$121, the debt retirement charge another \$112, and HST of \$237, for a total of \$2,266. We all understand: Here, her bill, her energy charge is only half of what she has to pay. That's Linda Stewart from Smiths Falls.

We also have Karen Sudds, who has contacted my office, who lives in Centreville in Lennox and Addington. The hydro usage last month on her bill was pretty constant. It was \$59, but her total bill for Ontario Hydro was \$160; so, \$59 for energy and \$160 in total costs. We hear these, on and on and on.

Sue and Elmer Reid from Lanark have seen their hydro bills double this year. They are constantly and vigilantly doing everything possible to save energy at their home, and it has more than doubled.

Krista Bergwerff from Carleton Place: Her last bill for hydro usage was up to \$335 for her residence, but on top of that, the delivery charge of \$233, plus, of course, the Liberals' favourite tax grab this year, the HST, and ended up with a total of \$669 for a residential home.

These are all people who are on the smart meter program, on the time-of-use program. There are problems, but this Liberal government chooses to involve themselves with spin and rhetoric, and instead of the Minister of Energy directing his administration to fix this problem, he chooses to be asleep at the switch and take the path of least resistance once more.

We all know that when you purchase something, even if you purchase a Cadillac or a Mercedes-Benz, sometimes you get a lemon. Well, Ontario has got a lemon with this Liberal Party, and we've got a lemon with this smart meter program. Why don't you stand up and do what's right, suspend it, and give the people of Ontario an honest, sensible approach to dealing with the problems that you guys have put them with?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: First, I want to make it clear from the onset, just in case people had lingering doubts or just in case my message wasn't as clear as I would want it to be, that I will be supporting this motion. I do have some questions.

The thrust of the motion is just, "Stop—not slow down, stop, unless and until you get it right." It's as simple as that. That's not rocket science. It seems to me that's what folks have been telling MPPs across Ontario over the course of the last weeks and months.

The motion does talk about having optional participation in time-of-use program metering, and I'm not sure what that would mean for a person who opted out or opted in. I really don't, but that's fine. We know the thrust of the motion, huh?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Slow it down.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Not slow it down, stop it, Mr. Murdoch. Put a halt to it. It has run amok. It has run off the track.

It's amazing that the government stands here today, indeed with hubris, when Robert Benzie, a respected journalist, Queen's Park bureau chief, in today's Toronto Star, dated September 28, 2010, after some polling across Ontario—and look, there are margins of error in polls, but I've got to tell you that when a poll of Ontarians says that 76% of the people polled say they would like to see another party in power, the margin of error is certainly no comfort to this government.

And when I tell you that this poll by a very long-standing—quite frankly, it's Angus Reid. Angus Reid is an independent polling firm, but it's the firm retained by the Toronto Star. Everybody knows it, it's no secret—I'm not letting the cat out of the bag; school kids know—

the Toronto Star is a Liberal newspaper, and that's fine. We know that. As long as people know it, we understand that.

Sometimes we get invited to grade 5 classes, because that's the first year that kids take civics in elementary school, and then many of us get invited to grade 10 classes. One of the things I like doing when I'm going down to, say, Monsignor Clancy or wherever down in Thorold, or Princess Elizabeth down in Welland, I'll pick up at least three of the Toronto papers: the Star, the Globe, the Sun, the Post; I don't think they sell the Post in Welland. It just doesn't have the circulation.

1630

I'll take it to a classroom to show youngsters how the three newspapers could have three very different front pages. Even when they're reporting on the same event, they can have three very different perspectives. I think it's a reasonably valuable learning device to help maybe cultivate critical thinking, and I'm a fan of critical thinking. Seventy-six per cent of people polled said they would like to see another party in power; 86%—in the polling world, that's pretty darn close to unanimity—of Ontarians say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago, and I know who the other 14% are. They're the ones up in Rosedale and places like that. I don't get into those neighbourhoods often, but I know where they are. They're the people with the Rolex watches and the Montblanc pens and, heck, not the Cadillacs but the Mercedes-Benzes, the big S series, the S600, the V-12 engine.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Never been in one.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes. Not that I begrudge him one, but I'd far sooner see him in a North American car, perhaps something coming out of Oshawa; that new Camaro is pretty slick, isn't it?

Eighty-six per cent say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. The article specifically connects electricity prices with that huge number of people who say that it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. "The global recession might officially be over, but the new HST and rising hydro bills have left 86% of Ontarians claiming 'it is harder now than it was two years ago to make ends meet.'"

Ontarians have to endure another year-plus of this? People are scared because people don't see this train slowing down. This is a case where the Premier, in his game of chicken with the Ontario public, has taken the steering wheel and thrown it out the window. That's scary stuff. That leaves the rest of us living in real fear, because the Premier has acknowledged absolutely no control.

Mr. John Yakabuski: All we can do is try to flatten the tires.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes.

I go down to my riding on weekends like everybody else does. I'm not sure the Liberals go home as often as they used to. If they do go home, I suspect some of them are more inclined to cloister themselves than not.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Half of them aren't here most days. They're hiding somewhere.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes.

The first stop on Saturday morning is Welland market. You know that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Never been there, either.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes.

And the Welland market has a wide range of people of all ages going there. The older folks still tend to go early in the morning. You've got to get there around 6:30 to see the older folks. And then the young families show up around 7:30, 8 o'clock; kids in strollers and moms and dads holding kids. The market's a busy place. It's a real hubbub.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly.

This is the corporate stuff on Rogers Communications. I want to thank the legislative library. I'm going to get into that later. You'll draw the connection. Bad, evil Rogers Communications Inc.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yes. The board of governors includes David Peterson. No wonder they're a screw-up.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Shurman notes.

I'd like to hear from some of the Liberal backbenchers who are going to, I presume, participate in this debate and pretend that they're—well, there's the old story about George Burns, the American comedian. Shortly before his death, he was asked by an interviewer what the secret was to his success. He replied, "The secret to my success is sincerity. And once you've learned how to fake sincerity, you've got it made."

The government had one heck of a caucus meeting today. They had a caucus meeting up on the second floor, down in the big room. They got fed. I don't know whether they got wine—well, there was whining; I know that, but that's w-h-i-n-i-n-g. I suspect they didn't get—because it's early in the day and the House is sitting in the afternoon. What's a Liberal's favourite whine? "I think I'm going to lose my seat."

Look, they would have understood it if the Toronto Sun had displayed these poll numbers. The Liberals could have said, "Oh, heck, it's just the Sun"—the National Post, even more so. The National Post? Heck, they hire ex-cons. Well, they hire current—not even ex-cons. Conrad Black was still in jail when he was working for the National Post.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Doing a good job too—good writing.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I prefer Konrad Yakabuski, myself.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's good too, but he's with the Globe.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes.

Interjection: Relation?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yeah, of course.

So here we are. It wasn't the Sun. It wasn't the National Post. It wasn't the Globe and Mail. It was the Toronto Star, the newspaper that, from time to time, will

attempt, through editorials or even bent, to apologize for this government's serious shortcomings.

So it was a very interesting caucus meeting; I can tell you that with certainty. There was some trepidation, and although I'm not certain, I'm pretty sure that the Premier of Ontario, facing his caucus, said, "Don't worry. It's just a poll; there's a margin of error." The fact that 76% of people, with, let's say, a 4% or 5% margin of error, want to see another party in power really doesn't give much weight to the "Don't worry" admonition by the Premier, does it? But it was, "Don't worry, because we've got to stick to the message." It's all about messaging, right?

The wacky, dopey thing the other day was that the Premier was telling people to do laundry on Saturday. He's got four or five kids of his own.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They've all left home.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But they were babies at one point. Poor Mrs. McGuinty obviously was saddled with all the laundry in that household, or else Mr. McGuinty would know that when you've got two, three or four kids, little ones, especially if one or two of them are still in diapers, you don't do laundry on Saturday morning; you do it every day, if not twice a day.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Every day was laundry day at our house. Fourteen kids—the washing machine never stopped.

Mr. Peter Kormos: See what happens when you have 14 children? The washing machine never stops, Yakabuski notes.

This is as wacky—you know, I was telling you about folks at the market. Folks at the market talk to me. What do they think? They talk to me, and they've talked to me now week after week after week. Whether it's the market, whether it's the Hungarian Presbyterian Church, whether it's the Hungarian Hall on Hellems Avenue, whether it's down at the Italian hall in Port Colborne, or up in Thorold at the Legion, people are telling me about their hydro bills. People are telling me about increased hydro rates, along with being hammered by Mr. McGuinty's HST and how it's making their lives less affordable.

And by God—you know, I didn't need a high-priced pollster to tell me that 86% of Ontarians say it's harder to make ends meet than it was two years ago. I didn't need a pollster to tell me that. You find that out in the Legion hall down on Morningstar Avenue. You find that out at the Port Colborne market on Friday morning. You find that out when you're over at Commisso's or Pupo's, a supermarket, picking up some groceries for the weekend, or when you go down to Niagara Sausage on Rusholme Road—it used to be Ontario Road—to get your barbecue sausage. Eighty-six per cent.

1640

I understand how government members would want to have their fears comforted. Some of them probably, in their minds, envision themselves in the fetal position, perhaps with a thumb in the mouth, looking for a pat on the back, being patted, petted. That's as close as you—Premier Dad has now become Premier Bad.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I have to ask you to withdraw that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course I withdraw that, Speaker. I'm surprised it came out of my mouth. I shocked even myself. I don't know what came over me. Perhaps if the Sergeant-at-Arms could ask Mr. Yakabuski to move a couple of rows over, his bad influence would be less evident. It's John Yak who's getting me into trouble all the time. You know that, don't you, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I have to remind you to refer to members by their riding names.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you, Speaker.

The smart meters aren't so smart. What was that movie? The pages know what it was. It was a silly movie—Dumb and Dumber. The smart meters are like Dumb and Dumber 2, the sequel to Dumb and Dumber—perhaps Dumb and Dumbest, or Stupid and Stupider.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Son of Stupid.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski notes.

Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats have been telling stories about real folks in question period now for weeks since the House has resumed sitting. They're stories about real people in all parts of Ontario—the north, the south, big city, small town, rural, urban—who simply can't take it anymore. They can't afford it.

By God, the minister talked about the government working arm in arm with Ontarians. Well, it's pretty hard to believe when the government has its hands in every Ontarian's pockets. That's not arm in arm, that's hands in pockets—and not their own.

Why government backbenchers couldn't prevail upon their Premier and simply say, "Whoa. The heat out there is far too intense. Perhaps save a few of us"—we know this ship doesn't have enough life jackets or lifeboats to rescue all those who are now in peril, but for Pete's sake, at least save some of them. Show some respect for some. Some of them are hard-working MPPs, and I, quite frankly, am going to miss them in the next Parliament—some of them; not all of them. That's if I'm fortunate enough to be elected myself. Who knows? I'm here at the will of electors.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a small wager on you.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski notes.

I've been around here a little while. I've read a few things about Parliaments and about the roles of parliamentarians. One of the things, as I understand it, is that government caucus members, backbenchers—and that's not a pejorative term—their job is to be reality checks for the Premier and the Premier's office. Because just like me and my Conservative colleagues, they're out at their market squares, too. They know what people are saying. They know that people are mad as hell about the smart meters and the skyrocketing electricity prices, that people are frightened, that they're fearful for themselves and their families. These are the same people—what, 300,000 of them?—who have lost good industrial jobs under the watch of Mr. McGuinty.

I was so pleased when the Premier announced on Monday that our question period is now going to be

available on demand. Eight days of question period are going to be available on demand on the Legislative Assembly website, so that people who can't access it through their—you can't get it on antenna—cable or through their satellite can go onto their computers. The website, of course, is ontla.on.ca—"ontla" for "Ontario Legislative Assembly." In fact, some people may be watching this process right here and now because it's live streaming when the House is sitting, but there's going to be a little feature on that website now where people can, on demand, select any one of the previous eight question periods. I thought that was a very exciting thing, because it will give more people access to question period, which arguably is the highlight of the day, although these opposition days are pretty interesting as well.

The problem is, your cable has to be working before you can receive this on your television set. Now, Rogers Communications Inc.—Rogers Cable—has got the worst customer service in the world. I can't believe that company is still in business. They should be put out of business. People who are watching this on television instead of their computer right now and using Rogers should be cancelling their Rogers contracts immediately, because Rogers will rip them off, Rogers will abuse them, Rogers will overcharge them, and Rogers will not fix their box when their box breaks down. First of all, you get on the phone to Rogers, and you're sitting on the phone for hours at a time talking to people who have no authority to really do anything. For instance, when Rogers says, "Punch in your phone number," you punch in your phone number and then some dough head says, "What's your name?" "My name is exactly in front of you. That's why you had me punch in my phone number. You tell me my name. You know my name." Then you give them your name and your address and they say, "What's your postal code?" For Pete's sake, the postal code is right in front of you too. They say that's for security purposes. What do you mean, security purposes? I'm calling you to give you money.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Tourist route, Speaker, tourist route: electricity, electricity consumption, smart meters, opposition motion.

I still don't have cable in my apartment. Those guys charge me a fortune, an arm and a leg, and I still don't have cable. I've spent hours on the phone with Rogers people. I finally sent a letter today to Nadir Mohamed. He's the president and chief executive officer. He's not going to open the letter; he's not going to read it. The letter, I thought, was rather clever, because I talked about options I had—Small Claims Court, because it would be fun to grill a Rogers executive in Small Claims Court—but they won't give me a detailed bill. That's how arrogant they are. And I thought, Small Claims Court, maybe with a Toronto Sun columnist sitting in to do a little bit of a write-up on Rogers—bad Rogers. Rogers is bad.

Who's on the board? David Peterson, former Premier. No wonder Rogers is such a screw-up. He's the beer-and-

wine-in-corner stores guy. He's the guy who said, during that election campaign in 1987, when Mel Swart, my predecessor, was running, "I have a very specific plan to reduce auto insurance premiums."

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member that the topic is smart meters.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I appreciate your direction and guidance in this regard. Of course we're talking about smart meters and the opposition day motion. But let me—this is a funny story.

David Peterson had a very specific plan to reduce auto insurance premiums, and his staff and the handlers went, "Oh," because there was no such plan. He blurted this out. This was unscripted. Well, all Hades broke loose. He got elected, and, of course, there was no plan. I got elected here in 1988 and we had a wonderful time holding the Liberal feet—plural of feet, feet—to the fire, because of course they had no—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Yakabuski interjects.

It was just incredible that a guy who fouled up auto insurance in Ontario as badly as David Peterson—he's the guy who introduced no-fault; thanks—is also fouling up Rogers Communications and Rogers Cable. If you have Rogers Cable, cancel it. Go with a satellite dish. Speaker, honest, I'm going to save you money and a lot of grief if you follow my advice: Cancel Rogers; go with a satellite dish. Rogers, bad; satellite dish, good.

We've got a scenario here where people are being taken to the cleaners. We know—well, the government doesn't know because it's been so reluctant; it's been in denial. Now, a member here was ruled out of order for suggesting that the government had its head stuck—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Somewhere—up.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Hillier interjects.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member to stay with the topic, which is smart meters.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But it's Mr. Hillier who was being unparliamentary, not me. Earlier today—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order, Madam Speaker, I don't believe there was any reference to me withdrawing or being unparliamentary when I referred to the party as I did.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order.

The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Hillier can be a very tricky guy sometimes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to refer to him by his riding name, and remember that we're talking about smart meters.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, whose comments I listened to very carefully, has a skilful and playful command of the English language that I admire. Look at what people are suggesting: that the government is ostriching. I don't know whether this was what Mr. Hillier was suggesting, because he wouldn't complete the sentence. I'm not going to say anything unparliamentary,

but I took it as suggesting that, like an ostrich, or at least a mythical ostrich—I don't know whether ostriches really do this, but at least we perceive them as doing it—the government has got its head buried in the sand so it can't see what's going on around it; it's got tunnel vision.

And 86% of Ontarians think they're doing worse than they were two years ago. "Was the HST the right thing or the wrong thing to do?"—a question put to Ontarians. Because the HST, of course, helped skyrocket electricity rates. What did Ontarians have to say to pollster Angus Reid when they were asked, "Was the HST the right thing or the wrong thing to do?" Eighty-one per cent said "wrong."

Mr. John Yakabuski: Eighty-one per cent.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I don't know. Let's be generous. Let's give them a five-point margin of error.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's still 75%. Give them—

Mr. Peter Kormos: You're still going down the pipes. The flushing noise is going to be overwhelming. Eighty-one per cent of Ontarians say, "HST: wrong thing to do."

Oh, eco fees.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What did they say about that?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ontarians were asked by Angus Reid. I read it in the Star. Rob Benzie, Queen's Park bureau chief for the Toronto Star, an experienced journalist—never made an error in an item that I'm aware of. Nobody else has told me about it. Were eco fees the right thing or wrong thing to do? Seventy-three per cent of Ontarians said they were the wrong thing to do.

Here's one that particularly irks me: Is online gambling the right thing or wrong thing to do? What did Ontarians say in response to that question: "Is online gambling the right thing or wrong thing to do?" Seventy-one per cent of Ontarians said it's the wrong thing to do.

What's going on? Why and how can this small group of Liberals somehow think they know more about everything than some 12 million, 13 million Ontarians?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Because we are inspired. That's why. We are inspired.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ruprecht interjects, to his detriment.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm sorry I mentioned it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Ruprecht apologizes. Would you like to try again, sir?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I remind the member that we're talking about—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. We're talking about smart meters, to bring you back.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you, Speaker; You're quite right. We're talking about smart versus not-so-smart, and I'm saying to you: Why is it that politicians think the voters are smart when they elect that politician, but the voters aren't that smart when they defeat that politician? You see, the Liberals thought the voters were pretty smart, back three years ago. The voters in Welland I think were pretty clever as well. The voters are always right. So how come the voters were smart three years ago

and now the voters are stupid? Because the voters don't like the HST—"No, they're wrong." The voters don't like eco fees—"Well, they're wrong," says Mr. McGuinty and his Liberal gang.

The voters don't like online gambling. "Well, they're wrong," says Mr. McGuinty.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Can the member please stay on topic? I've been listening just now, and he's way off topic. He's going away to the left, away to the right, but he's certainly not on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. I remind the member to confine his comments to smart meters.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And I want to extend to the member for Davenport a hearty hola, and welcome back to the Legislative Assembly.

Here we are, this government insisting that everybody is wrong and only they're right. Is this a personality disorder? Can a government have a personality disorder? Because that's symptomatic. You look at the DSM manual, and that's symptomatic of a certain personality disorder.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, when they all start drinking the same Kool-Aid, Peter, they're all going to get it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Interesting comment by Mr. Yakabuski.

What is it? What is it? Every one of these government members got elected believing that they were going to make a difference here. Every one of these members came here convinced that they were going to do better than the guy or the gal that they were running against. I believe that, and I understand. I don't deny that to any one of them—well, maybe a couple, but by and large, I don't deny that to the vast majority of them. There's not big money to be made here, and quite frankly, once you're finished here, you were a somebody and then you're a nobody. You're not even a footnote. That's noted by Mr. Ruprecht.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Are we allowed to eat in here? If so, would the member from Davenport share it with the rest of us?

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. I thought for a minute Mr. Murdoch was hungry and he wanted us to order something.

But what is it about this? It's a fortress mentality, amongst other things. Is it an element of fear or subjugation, or is it the group syndrome that prevents government members who know full well—government members aren't surprised about the poll results published by the Toronto Star today. Government members know that the vast majority of Ontarians don't like the HST.

Why, the member for Scarborough-Rouge River, doing his House duty here in the Legislature, knows that the vast majority of Ontarians don't like the HST, and I don't know—I don't want to put words in his mouth by any stretch of the imagination, but I know him to be an honourable person. He has a distinguished city hall

career. I know that he feels a little bit—"Ahem": He has to clear his throat before he spins the government line with his constituents, right? You know that, because he's an honourable man; he's an honourable person.

Why, look, we've got the member from Mississauga–Streetsville here. I know him to be an honourable person. I can't help but think that when the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, sitting here in his chair, talks to his constituents that he has to clear his throat and overcome the hesitation when it comes to the government spin around HST. We know that 86% of Ontarians feel that they are worse off rather than better off from two years ago.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Laundry day is Saturday, but Liberal spin day is every day.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's a wonderful line.

We know that 86% of Ontarians say our rising electricity costs and the HST are what have made their lives worse off, as compared to better off, over the last two years. I can't help but think—there's the member for Brampton West sitting over there. There's the member for Brampton West sitting there in this chamber, and I can't help but believe that the member for Brampton West has difficulty with—no, him I believe; he wouldn't have any difficulty with the government's spin lines. But the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton does. I'm sure that member has difficulty with the government spin lines. Sitting right next to him is the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan. He's up there—

Interjection: There he is.

1700

Mr. Peter Kormos: He's here, but he's up there in Thunder Bay. I can't imagine how he can, in good conscience—86% say they're worse off, 14% say they're better off; maybe they're all in Thunder Bay. Maybe all of that 14%—somehow there's an enclave of the Bentley, Rolls-Royce, Rolex set. The people who are here in the government benches have been elected at least once, many of them twice, and some of them are veterans. They know you don't win elections when 81% of the people are against you. They know that you don't win elections when 73% of the people are against you. These Liberal backbenchers know you don't win elections when 71% of the people are against you. When 76% of the population say they would like to see another party in power, what are these guys going to do?

You know those signs outside service stations; they're on a vertical rod and they spin like that? So—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind the member to talk about smart meters in the time remaining.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've got so little time left. But let me finish that image. So what are these government members going to do? Are they going to be in front of the service station, where it spins in the wind, and one side of the sign is going to be red and one side is going to be blue and the other side is going to be green, so it's, "Whichever one you prefer, vote for me"? No, the public doesn't go for that. The public is smart. Let's accept that

as a premise. If you're not prepared to listen to the public and take direction from the people of Ontario, then you have no business being in power, none whatsoever. When, even worse, you treat the public with disdain, you tell them, "Go away. We know better than you"—by God, don't you tell that to some retiree from a steel mill or a carborundum factory or some guy whose back is broken and his arms are arthritic, his shoulder is gone because he's been laying block or brick all his life and who's now fearful, along with his elderly wife, that he won't be able to afford to continue to live in his own home, the home that he's paid for.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On a point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It's not a point of order. I remind the member for Davenport that it's not a point of order. The member for Welland, you have time to finish.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Davenport's defence of Bob Rae will have to occur in some other discussion or debate. But I'm pleased to see that Mr. Rae does have some friends left, and the member for Davenport is clearly one of them, and I trust that Mr. Rae will canvass with him as he's going door to door. I'm sure that will be a big help with some of his ethnic voters who still feel betrayed.

Mr. John Yakabuski: How is Fidel doing anyway, Tony?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, Mr. Yakabuski.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm sorry, Mr. Ruprecht?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Welland will stay with the topic, the smart meters.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm just trying to ensure that these voices get recorded in Hansard because this is a debate, and it's not a simple debate, it's a complex debate, and this chamber—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Let me remind you that you have the floor. You do not have to quarterback other members of the chamber.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm sorry, Speaker. Sometimes my generosity of spirit overwhelms me, and my inclusivity. It's probably a problem I have, being too inclusive.

What will be interesting to see is how many government members are here to vote against this motion.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Enough.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Aha. Exactly. Mr. Brown says, "Enough"—just barely enough, because they want to defeat the motion, but they don't all want to be stuck or identified with their support for smart meters.

This is talking about electricity. Smart meters are going to be amongst the—there's only supposed to be one third rail. But there's a third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, 10th, 11th, 12th rail for the Liberals in this upcoming provincial election. Smart meters are going to be a third rail, and you're going to have a hard time disavowing your association with it when you've spoken in support of it and when you vote against a relatively benign motion. I was very surprised. Usually opposition day motions are hard-hitting, aggressive, partisan things.

This is the least partisan motion I've ever witnessed on an opposition day, and I find it remarkable that we won't have at least—it would be truly effective for some government members to support this motion. They could then divorce themselves from the kamikaze policies of Mr. McGuinty and the Liberals. Instead of having to rely upon the 19% or the 29%, maybe they could start to rely on the 81% or the 71% and appeal to them for votes.

Sometimes you've crossed the threshold. It's the Edsel syndrome: You can never recover from it. Brian Mulroney suffered it. He could have walked on water at that point towards the end of his career as Prime Minister and the headline would have been "Brian Mulroney Can't Swim," because everybody had just turned on him.

You see, the problem is, this government has, I think, reached that point as well. So maybe it is just throwing hands up, maybe it's just "Get the gas oven going"—because, Lord knows, if you have an electric oven, you can't afford to turn it on—"blow out the pilot light and just lay me down to sleep." Maybe that's the perspective. Or, in fact, "We'll go out in flames." But that's a real disservice to the people of Ontario; it really is. And I expect, quite frankly, more from these people across, some of whom I have great regard and respect for.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm glad to stand up in my place and speak about this motion. I listened to the Leader of the Opposition when he started speaking about this motion. I listened to him carefully, with an open mind. I wanted to see if I want to support you or not support it. I came with an open mind to listen to the opposition about what they are going to say. It may be something I don't know. I listened; I didn't find anything.

I tried again to listen to the member from Welland, for almost 40 minutes, to see if he had something new to say about smart meters, why he is supporting this initiative or this motion. I didn't find anything, because he spoke about many different things except the smart meter.

So, Madam Speaker, as you know, life evolves on a daily basis, technology evolves on a daily basis. I remember when I bought my BlackBerry a couple of years ago. Today it is almost obsolete because technology updates itself on a regular basis. So that's why, when we installed the meter in many different homes across the province of Ontario—it was almost between 40 and 60 years ago, when that meter was very advanced. At the present time, we have a lot of advanced technology that gives us the ability to read the meter from a certain office somewhere in a city or in the province. It gives us an accurate reading on every meter, and it also gives us the chance to evaluate the consumption of hydro on a regular basis. That's why, when we introduced them to Ontarians, we wanted to modernize the electricity system in the province of Ontario. We want to be accurate when we price people across the province of Ontario. We want to also divide the consumption into three levels, which are peak time, mid-peak and off-peak time, which starts from Monday to Thursday, from 7 to 9 o'clock evening time as

a peak time, and from 9 to 7 o'clock in the morning from Monday to Friday—to Saturday; I'm sorry—as also mid-peak time. Also, we want off-time to start from 9 in the evening to 7 o'clock in the morning from Monday to Friday, and also the weekend to be off-peak time, to allow the residents of the province of Ontario to pay less if they choose to use electricity in those times.

I had a smart meter installed in my house in the city of London. London Hydro decided to install the whole city, and they expect to finish by April. At that time, the whole city will be under smart meter watch, and people will have the choice whether they use the electricity during the peak time or off-time or at mid-time. They're given the choice.

1710

I listened to the speaker when he spoke, and I paid attention to him. I hope he's paying attention to my speech, because we listened to them. They usually give us another view of the story.

All Ontarians, as a result of the downturn of the economy, are facing tough times. We understand that. We listen to our constituents. They come to our offices on a regular basis. We go to events on a regular basis also and mix and mingle with the hard-working people of Ontario, who tell us stories. That's why we came here, back to our caucus or to this place, to discuss this important issue and also to try our best to solve and alleviate some of the problems they are facing on a regular basis. That's also why the Minister of Finance today stood up in his place and announced a strategy to support the people of Ontario, to give them an energy credit to support them in a difficult time, which affects 750,000 seniors in this province of Ontario, who worked hard for all of us to build this beautiful province for you, me and all the people who are going to come after us. Also, it's going to affect almost 2.5 million people, hard-working Ontarians, who have fixed incomes or have no ability to make extra cash. That's why everyone will be allowed to benefit from those credits, to support them in paying their hydro bill.

I know, we know, everybody knows that we're facing difficult times in Ontario. That's why we're standing with the people of Ontario to support them, to give them a chance to be able to remain in their homes, to be able to pay their bills.

We have a plan. We have a plan to work with the people of Ontario. We have a plan to make sure we have enough energy, enough electricity to keep the lights on, unlike the other party, which in 2003 put this province in the dark. Since we got elected in 2003, we have created more than 6,000 megawatts, and we are also in the process of creating more through the green energy strategy, to make sure most of the people of this province benefit from the strategy. Also, we're engaging every city, every member, every place in the province of Ontario to be a part of the strategy, because we believe it's important, especially when you engage the people of Ontario, to allow them to participate, to be a part of this process to make sure all the lights stay on every day, 24 hours a day.

I listened to the opposition trying to put the freeze on these important steps. I read some kind of a report from the Ottawa region, and many different cities in the province of Ontario showed us they benefited from the smart meter. Their consumption went down. Also, they showed us the benefits from the peak time, off-peak time and mid-time, because they choose to use their electricity, and they do the laundry, they use their dishwasher, they do whatever they need in off-peak times, which I think our electricity, you know, produced and sent to the United States at a cheaper cost. It would be a benefit for our economy, for our community, for our province. We're trying to utilize this production of electricity, especially the off-peak times, when no company, no factory is open. It's our strategy to create a choice for the people of Ontario.

Also, I'm wondering—the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was talking about whether people can opt out from that strategy. I don't think so. Technically, you can't do that; they cannot. But we have an electronic system that can feed the whole city or the whole province or the whole area. You cannot tell this person, “You can be on an old meter” and this person, “You can be on a new meter, and you can and you can't.” We want to have an equal field, where everyone has a chance to conserve, if they want to conserve.

That's our strategy. That's one part of our strategy. We're going to continue proceeding with our strategy because it's the right strategy, and the people of Ontario understand it. In my riding of London–Fanshawe, in my city of London, people are looking forward to April to start using the smart meters to benefit from conservation and to benefit from the low price.

We cannot continue to say the price of energy is going to remain that little, that much, because we have to have extra pricing somehow to refurbish our system, to have enough for generations, to produce for all the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The members opposite can speak as much as they want. When they were in power, we had no lights. That's not our strategy. Our strategy is to continue refurbishing, to continue producing more megawatts to support the people of Ontario, and to keep the lights on.

Thank you for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'm pleased to follow the member for London–Fanshawe. He's exuberant and quite a fast talker. The reason I say that is that, for me, it would be daunting to follow the member from Welland. So it's nice to have a little bit of a break. I'm captivated by whatever the member from Welland was talking about. The statistics are compelling. Those jumped out at me.

At any rate, Speaker, as you have pointed out a number of times this afternoon, we are debating smart meters, and the relative merits, the relative demerits, if that's a word, of this smart meter proposal.

This debate's been going on for five years now. Five years ago, we were given some information—actually, Dr. Q chaired a standing committee and visited my riding, and that was almost five years ago. But I can tell you that over the last five years, people in my area have not been referring to these tax machines as smart. They have other words, and “smart” is not one of them.

We have heard this afternoon that these so-called smart meters, rather than adding up the total usage of electricity between billing periods, determine the time of day that usage occurred, allowing a higher rate to be charged during the peak hours. We've been told the goal is to force consumers, because of that, to shift their consumption to the lower rate, the late-night hours when electricity is a little cheaper. So, in theory, these so-called smart meters could reduce peak demand.

However, we've seen a number of problems arise when this theory is put into practice. As I mentioned, it was almost five years ago that some of these problems were outlined. It was the justice committee, and the member for Etobicoke North chaired hearings. To their credit, they travelled the province almost five years ago to discuss smart meters. I know they visited Norfolk county. That was in February 2006. The Haldimand Federation of Agriculture testified down in our area. Frank Sommer pointed out their concern that smart meters signalled the creation of “a large and costly bureaucracy” that will negatively impact Ontario's farmers vis-à-vis their competitors. That was almost five years ago. He noted, “We're concerned that Ontario may be embarking on an experiment that will set us on a course that will leave our farm industry and the rest of Ontario on a less competitive footing with our neighbours...” That was five years ago.

Carol Chudy, who's associated with the Clean, Affordable Energy Alliance, picked up on that theme: “Reliable and reasonably priced power is essential to their sustainability”—again, referring to farmers. “Much of the farming activities that are energy-intensive simply cannot be shifted. You can't turn off your greenhouse at peak time. You can't stop your heating or air conditioning”—electrically controlled fans, for example—“for livestock, milking and storage of product etc.”

Ms. Chudy further outlined the smart meter challenge for business: “Smaller businesses having hours of operation coinciding with peak-of-day use will likewise be penalized.”

I'll continue with her presentation: “Someone has pointed out that the McGuinty government is encouraging to throw your dryer on in the night time, and yet the insurance companies indicate to us that dryers are a cause of house fires. There are some things that just have not been carefully thought through.”

There was also testimony that day—these hearings were held at the Little River Inn in Simcoe. It's a great motel/restaurant combination.

1720

Again, going back almost five years ago, with respect to the cost, we were told, “With regard to cost, the Min-

istry of Energy indicates installation costs of about \$1 billion.” Mr. Hampton was sitting in on those hearings, and he indicated that it’s probably now closer to \$2 billion.

This is something this government was told five years ago: \$2 billion, plus maintenance, plus monitoring costs. The initial cost for the meter is approximately \$500 per household. That was the estimate five years ago, plus monthly fees for monitoring and processing of information. The key word here is “estimate” because, again as was pointed out, no firm costs and no firm benefits have been determined. These figures were not presented five years ago, and they have not been presented in any accurate way today.

Fast-forward five years. Here we are. We’re still debating smart meters, and some of our worst fears are becoming realized. Smart meters have meant little conservation and a major cost to consumers. We request this government to do the right thing, do the smart thing, if you will: Hit the pause button on this program. Provide some choice; allow ratepayers to opt out of something that’s going to be very, very costly, something this government was told five years ago on their own standing committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I’m pleased to be able to speak to the motion that we have on the floor here. I will tell you that I will be voting against the motion. Rather than explaining in my own words why, I think I’ll leave to it Gordon Miller, Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner. Gordon Miller said, just this week, “It has been proposed to let people choose whether to pay a flat rate for their electricity or have time-of-use pricing. I believe this would be short-sighted. Going back to the same old, same old that didn’t work is not the answer.”

I happen to agree with the Environmental Commissioner that going back to what doesn’t work is not a useful thing to do, so let’s talk a little bit about what we are trying to do to move forward. Our energy strategy involves a number of things. The first is reliability. Obviously, one of the things that we needed to do to increase reliability was to increase generation, to make sure that we can generate enough power for Ontario in Ontario. We’ve been working on that.

The other thing that we found out when we came into government was that the transmission lines in Ontario were woefully outdated and needed a lot of attention, and we have been investing in new transmission lines so that the power won’t go out because of inadequate transmission capacity. And yes, both of those have cost money, and we make no apology for making sure that the lights go on.

One of the things that I don’t think people have talked about very much is that with the smart meters, it actually has an impact on local reliability. This isn’t an urban issue particularly. If you happen to be in northern Ontario or certainly in cottage country, you would know that whenever the wind blows, trees fall down, they knock out the lines, and the power goes out. Not because of bad

transmission, not because of lack of generation, but simply when a great big white pine falls down on a transmission line, the lights go out. The problem right now is that it takes a long time to figure out whose lights have gone out—and trust me; I know that. I’ve sat in my cottage in the middle of winter with the lights out for two or three days. Thank God for wood stoves. It’s one of the great things. You can chop a hole in the ice and get water. Okay, we can handle it. But where the smart meters come into this is, right now, hydro depends on either people calling in or walking the line. So it’s not unusual on our road to find a linesman walking the line not to repair it; just trying to figure out where the breaks are. With smart meters, they can find out via the smart meter, which will transmit the information to figure out who all is out, and see the pattern for the entire area immediately so they can follow the grid and see what-all is out and get a sense of where the problems are. Instead of wasting half a day or several hours or even several days, they can get to fixing it instead of trying to figure it out. That’s one of the side benefits of smart meters that nobody’s talking about.

Another thing that we’re doing, because we are moving away from coal-fired generation and moving to cleaner forms of generation, is cleaning up our air. Again, for me, that’s a real issue, because when I grew up in Guelph, nobody ever worried about smog in Guelph. Do you know when we started to worry about dirty air and smog in Guelph? It was actually when the coal-fired generators at Nanticoke became part of the base power supply in Ontario. On hot days when the south wind came up toward Guelph, that’s when we had smog days. That’s when we had smog days, when we became reliant on coal power. Now that we are less reliant on coal power, we can clean up our air. I think that’s important for the health of the people of Ontario.

What about jobs? A lot of people have been out of work, and a lot of people have been out of work in Guelph because we’re a manufacturing town, a big auto sector town. My largest auto parts manufacturer, because of our Green Energy Act, is switching some of the manufacturing capacity away from auto parts and into wind turbine parts. More people have got called back to work. Just this summer, we had a major announcement from a company called Canadian Solar, which has been manufacturing solar panels in China. Because of the Green Energy Act, they said, “We’re going to repatriate our Canadian manufacturing, possibly all of our North American manufacturing, in Ontario.” They looked around Ontario and said, “Guelph is the place we want to do this.” As they expand their business in Guelph, there will be up to 500 more jobs related to manufacturing, solar manufacturing.

So I am very supportive of our energy strategy and all the different things we can do.

I do want to talk briefly about time of use. First of all, I think people need to understand that the mid-peak price is the same as the normal price, if I can put it that way. So there are times of the day, if you’re on smart metering, where you pay the usual price, some times

where you get a cut rate because it's off-peak, some times where you pay a premium because it's at the highest-demand time of day. The Leader of the Opposition was up this morning saying how we were requiring people to do their laundry at 2 o'clock in the morning. That's nonsense. The off-peak cut rate cuts in at about 9 in the evening—and all weekend. I don't know when the Leader of the Opposition does his laundry, but—Madam Speaker, I'm sure you can relate to this—I have a couple of kids, I've got grandkids, I've been working most of my time as a mom or a grandmother. I often stick in a load of laundry before I go out in the morning or when I come home at night. Even now, I often do a couple of loads of laundry before I go out to an event on a Saturday or Sunday. I don't know what world the Leader of the Opposition is in, but real women do their laundry whenever they get a chance, and that can include weekends and evenings.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I'm glad to be able to talk on this motion, for a little bit, anyway. I'm glad to see that the government is actually debating with us today. The last time I debated, they wouldn't even debate a bill that they had; it was their own bill and they wouldn't talk about it. So I'm glad to see today that they finally sort of woke up over there and are debating.

It's really sad; I haven't seen any of them want to support this, which is such a simple thing to support. We're not saying you have to take the program away; we just want it to stop. They keep telling us over there, every time they speak, that they're speaking on behalf of the people of Ontario. Would that be that 14% that supports them? I guess. It is a little discouraging that that's all they keep telling us, that they're speaking on behalf of the people. I don't know who they're talking about, the 14%, because in my riding, it is really upsetting to—I guess it's probably the 81% or the 85% or whatever.

1730

I have some people in my riding who have sent me letters, and this is just a small bit of what they have sent me. I have a constituent named Gord Smith, of Markdale, who explains how the government is making life less affordable for him. This is what he said: "I was just reading in today's paper of another tax levy on hydro consumers. With the smart meters, the time-of-day usage costs, the HST on our bills once again, the consumers are being hit in the pocketbook. Also, just when does the debt reduction charge on our hydro bills cease to be in effect? With my own personal debts at least I could see an end date, but not so with this added cost." That's from Gord Smith of Markdale, and a lot of people are saying that.

I have another constituent, Greg McNicol of Owen Sound. He writes to us and says, "You want the residents of Ontario to save energy and we do for two reasons—one [is] to save money and the other [is] to save electricity. Unfortunately, the revenue for the large corporation went down because of the success of a program that they developed, but please do not allow them to increase the revenue on the backs of the people who have worked

hard to reduce their energy use." These are, again, people from my riding who are writing to us, and they're upset. These smart meters are not smart, and they're costing the people of Ontario a lot of money.

Here's another one.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Ted says he knows there's another one. There's more, Ted; I just picked up three that I thought I would read to the House.

Sue Gosnell says, "I do not question the necessity to use our hydro during low-usage times, and conserve, etc. What I do seriously question is Hydro 'being in my home,' knowing when I'm using high volume and the potential infringement that brings. It has a feeling of 'Big Brother' watching me...."

"From the very insidious implementation of the HST to our smart meters and numerous other government implementations, it feels as if we have very little voice and there is a sense of our democracy eroding ... and many people I speak to share this perspective."

Most of the people we speak to in our riding have the same perspective. And it's not as if we're saying to end this program. What we're doing: Today the Ontario PC caucus introduced an opposition day motion that calls on Dalton McGuinty to freeze his smart meter program until the problems with the program's implementation have been fixed and families are given the choice to participate in the time-of-use program or not. That's all we're asking; it's not a big thing. I would hope that everyone would speak to this, even the ones who are representing the 14% of the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's opposition day motion "to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed"—I want to come back to that in a moment and ask him about that—"and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program."

Speaking specifically to the motion, a couple of questions come to my mind. The first question that comes to my mind is, who decides "until billing problems are fixed"? Who makes that designation, and when do we decide that there are no longer any problems with the billing process that you're describing? Therefore, to me it seems very much like trying to prove a negative in science. You just can't prove a negative in science, so we're trying to get to that part. Then I hear other people talk about, "Smart meters aren't very smart"; they're reading emails, they're saying that they don't want this to be used at all. And when they don't want these to be used at all, it's in conflict with your resolution, your motion. We want to make sure we know what that is. So I do want to know about that.

Yes, there are some billing problems. There were billing problems before the meters were even used. There have been billing problems at every one of our constituency offices, where they talk to them about, "I think

there has been a problem with the billing.” When does the billing problem cease so that we can get on with the program? I do have a problem with that portion of the resolution.

“Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate” or not: What you’re basically saying is that the complexity of the system will now double. Now we’re going to have to have a system without the smart meters, with the smart meters, with the time-of-use and without the time-of-use. I think the complexity that you’re talking about goes against what many people and several countries have already said that they want to do and that they are moving towards. Governor Schwarzenegger in California is saying that it’s the smartest thing that they could do for their state.

What happens right now? Right now, we’ve got Brant, my riding. The city of Brantford, through its hydro, Brantford Power, has put in about 80% to 82% of all the meters. The hydro companies have plenty of people who have meters in their homes that are 30, 40, 50 and 60 years old. There has been no advancement of technology that we can use.

In terms of where we’re headed in this direction, this pause that’s being talked about, there have been two different stories coming on. It’s easy to get caught up in the here and now and the day-to-day politics that are going on. Parties quarrel back and forth. We were hearing some of the to and fro going on. We compete for headlines and we get wrapped up in the issue of the day, but before you know it, we’ve got the next day coming up and we’re still doing the same thing.

What we’re talking about here is defining—if you would for me very clearly; I would ask you to do so—when the billing problem gets fixed, who designates, how it gets designated, and, if there are any problems, does it stop again? That’s the difficulty here. It’s like, prove a negative science: It just can’t be done. But people hang on to that saying, “Until you can prove to me that that doesn’t have an impact, then we’re not going to use it.” I think maybe we’d better make sure that we understand that there’s a difference between the two. It’s almost like using a double negative in English.

The time-of-use pricing is just one of the advantages of smart meters. We’re also talking about how, as a critical one, it provides an opportunity for consumers to shift their consumption to the times that they feel are most appropriate. Contrary to some people’s characterization that it’s forcing people to do it when they don’t want to do it, it’s the times of consumption that they get to choose from. So if you’re talking about real choice, when they make their decision on when they are going to use their power is laid out very clearly for them in the technology that is now available for them to see.

Paul Ferguson, who’s the CEO of Newmarket Hydro, said, “The introduction of smart meters in Newmarket builds the foundation for new advances in the way we use electricity. The old saying ‘You can only manage what you can measure’ has never been more” important.

“The introduction of time-of-use pricing in Newmarket over the past 18 months has seen consumers

begin to shift their consumption from weekdays to weekends, reducing the strain on the electricity system,” which seems to be getting lost in this debate. The prime times in which we’re using our electricity are very, very critical at this time. We’re simply trying to change a culture. If we’re trying to change the culture, we have to change the attitude. What we’re hearing is the same old, same old that allows us to continue to fall back into the same old debate about trying to find out who can mark up who, as opposed to “Let’s find out if we can do this right.”

As we’re doing it right, the problem lies in saying, “We can’t move forward until you can prove to me it’s perfect.” That’s not going to happen. Ask Alexander Graham Bell, who was told, when he invented the telephone, that it was nothing more than a little toy and it wasn’t going to go anywhere, because they didn’t understand the scope of what was being done as it was being invented.

As technology continues to rise, the same people who said that the heart could not be transplanted said the same thing over and over again: “Do not do it. It’s impossible. It’s against the laws of nature. Don’t do it.” But they did it and they moved forward.

I’m suggesting to you in an appropriate way that this motion is basically saying the same kind of thing that the naysayers said before: Don’t move forward, because there’s too many question marks, and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That was a very disappointing conclusion to his speech. Let me tell you why, and why I’m supporting this resolution by Mr. Yakabuski and why Tim Hudak and the PC caucus will continue to stand up on behalf of Ontario families.

1740

We’re calling on Mr. McGuinty to suspend his smart meter program until the problems with the program’s implementation have been fixed and families in Ontario are given the choice to participate in the time-of-use program or not.

We’re talking about what we can do right—and I’m using a direct quote from the previous speaker, the member from Brant: “What can we do right?” Well, we know, for example, that this government ignored warnings that smart meters were flawed. They didn’t get it right, despite the warnings from members on this side of the chamber.

I can also tell you, anecdotally, when I was first elected in a by-election and these costly and expensive Liberal energy experiments started taking effect back in 2006 after they had taken over the reins of power in 2003, my constituents were calling, very nervous about these smart meters. They thought a few things were happening: one is, their prices were going to go up; the other was that they were going to lose choice and, in some cases, their own freedoms and their own rights.

Guess what’s happened four years later? We know for a fact that prices are going up because of this government, and we know for a fact that people feel they do not

have choice. We see it each and every day. Ontario families are now afraid to open their hydro bills because they know they only go one way, and that way is up. They're not going down. They're going up, and they keep going up. That's why this motion is important for this Legislature, to recognize that Ontario families can no longer afford the McGuinty Liberal government.

As many people here know, I'm on the Twitter and other social media. Today I put a call out: "Let me know what you think." I went and looked on my Twitter for different buzzwords, whether it was "smart meters" or "hydro." Here are some of the comments.

"You have to do laundry at 10 p.m. to save money." They can tell that mother she's wrong, like they're trying to tell this mother.

They say, "This elected official"—and by that, I think they mean Mr. McGuinty—"redefines the free world." It goes to that attitude of anti-choice that this government has.

They also say, "We live in a northern climate. We can't use the clothesline in January. I expected a jump by my energy, but I didn't expect a 50% jump. I'm not impressed."

These are some of the comments that are coming from Ontarians.

The reality is, this Liberal government run by Dalton McGuinty is out of touch. They have lost sight of the importance of everyday Ontarians. They don't get it, or they don't care, or they're so wrapped up in their own ideology that they don't want to fix a problem that they knew existed as they forced these smart meters on Ontarians. They knew full well that their so-called smart meter plan was botched, but they still continue to go ahead, full steam.

That's why our caucus is calling on Dalton McGuinty to suspend the smart meter program until the billing problems are fixed, so that we can let Ontario families decide if they want this program or not.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I look forward to hearing from our critic Mr. Yakabuski, as he concludes this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to, I believe, end this debate today on my opposition day motion, which is essentially asking the government to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until the problems associated with it can be fixed.

I heard the member from Brant say earlier that he wants us to be more specific with the problems. Well, they know of the problems. The Minister of Energy knows of the problems. He knows what his own utilities have told him. He knows what 21 utilities have told him about the fact that this is impossible to—that it's wrong-headed to rush this through, that they don't have time to get this done and have all the bugs ironed out in time for this program.

They're doing it because you're telling them to do it, because the Premier's telling you to tell them to do it. That's how it works. It's all politically motivated. The

program is racked with problems, and they need to fix them.

The Premier talked about other jurisdictions. Let's get a couple of things clear. This party, the PC Party of Ontario, under our leader, Tim Hudak, is very much in tune and on board and in favour of conservation as a way to reduce energy usage in this province. We in no way, shape or form oppose technology. What we oppose is when the government tries to rush something through when it's not working, it is shown to be not working, and is only there in transience and stubbornness that will not allow them to take a step back and take a breath. Because the problem is, it's a political plan, and that's all they want to stick with.

The Premier talks about other jurisdictions that have smart meter programs in place or are planning to implement them. He talks about British Columbia and California; the member for Brant talked about Governor Schwarzenegger, Florida, New York and Illinois. But the fact is that each and every one of those jurisdictions offers people a choice, a choice about whether or not to be part of the time-of-use pricing. They're saying, "How do you do that?" Well, that is what's in place right now. There are all kinds of jurisdictions throughout the province that are already on time-of-use pricing. My brother is on it in Owen Sound. Most of the places in the province are not on it yet. So for them to say you can't run a hybrid system is patently false. They're doing it now. What we have suggested is that the people in Ontario should have this choice because there are many people who can't shift their load. The agricultural industry—if you find a way where you can tell those cows when and when not to produce milk and make sure they only produce it in the off-peak times, you tell me know, I say to the Minister of Energy. If you can let the small business who has a clientele that is only a day-time clientele—a restaurant business or whatever—to shift his time of use to the middle of the night, we'd love to hear that, Mr. Minister. But you know you can't.

There are some people who cannot shift their loads. There are families who work shift-work who cannot shift their loads. We're suggesting that you give those people a choice so that they can make the determination: "Does this smart meter program, does this time-of-use pricing work for me or does it not?" For some people it will work, but for an awful lot of people it will not, and we're suggesting that you give them a choice. For the person who examines their own usage and says, "You know what? This timetable is something that is doable for myself and my family," they have a choice. Let them have the smart meter running on time-of-use programming and let them accrue any benefits, if there are some; and if there are not, they'll know soon enough.

But for those people who have already determined, because of the style they live, because of the job they have, because of the business they run, because of the fact that they raise dairy cattle or do other agricultural jobs, that they cannot shift that load, they cannot shift that time-of-use, then we're saying, give them a choice. It's a very simple motion. It is a very doable motion, and

I would hope that those members from the opposition who want to talk about really making real change, positive change for the people using energy in this province, which is everybody—this is an opportunity for them to stand up and say it's not always politics; it's not always ideologically driven. Sometimes it's about doing the right thing for the people in this province. I thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time has expired.

Mr. Yakabuski has moved opposition day number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine

Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario

Miller, Norm
Murdoch, Bill
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Carroll, Aileen
Chiarelli, Bob
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael

Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mauro, Bill
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Murray, Glen R.

Naqvi, Yasir
Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 21; the nays are 43.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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 Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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 Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
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, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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 / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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
Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
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) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River 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 civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex 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) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge 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) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan 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) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans 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) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill 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) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) O'Toole, John (PC) Oraziotti, David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Durham Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Kitchener–Conestoga Elgin–Middlesex–London Scarborough–Agincourt	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP) Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Beaches–East York Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London–Fanshawe Timiskaming–Cochrane Northumberland–Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton–Mississippi Mills Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB) Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Perth–Wellington Simcoe–Grey	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS 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
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**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, Toby Barrett
Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Leeanna Pendergast, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Steve Clark, Helena Jaczek
Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**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: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
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
Wayne Arthurs, M. Aileen Carroll
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**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
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Continued from back cover

Biorem	
Mrs. Liz Sandals	2360
Karen Gledhill	
Ms. Sylvia Jones	2360
Mining industry	
Mr. David Ramsay	2360
Canada 55+ Games	
Mr. Steve Clark	2360
Thunder Bay marathon	
Mr. Bill Mauro	2361
Peterborough Lakers	
Mr. Jeff Leal	2361
Tennis tournament	
Mr. Yasir Naqvi	2361

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Government Agencies	
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters)	2362
Report deemed adopted	2362

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act, 2010, Bill 109, Mr. Duncan / Loi de 2010 sur l'amélioration du crédit d'impôt de l'Ontario pour les coûts d'énergie et les impôts fonciers à l'intention des personnes âgées et des familles de l'Ontario, projet de loi 109, M. Duncan	
First reading agreed to	2362

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Energy and property tax credit	
Hon. Dwight Duncan	2362
Mr. Norm Miller	2363
Mr. Peter Tabuns	2363

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Multiple sclerosis treatment	
Mr. Steve Clark	2364
British home children	
Mr. Jim Brownell	2364
Taxation	
Mr. Jim Wilson	2364
School transportation	
Mr. Randy Hillier	2365
Kidney disease	
Mr. Jeff Leal	2365
Taxation	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	2365
Community safety	
Mr. Khalil Ramal	2365
Taxation	
Mr. Jim Wilson	2365
Chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency	
Mr. Randy Hillier	2366
Services for the developmentally disabled	
Mrs. Julia Munro	2366
Taxation	
Mr. Bill Murdoch	2366
Services for the developmentally disabled	
Mrs. Joyce Savoline	2366
Taxation	
Mr. Jim Wilson	2367

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Smart meters	
Mr. John Yakabuski	2367
Mr. Tim Hudak	2367
Hon. Brad Duguid	2368
Mr. Peter Shurman	2370
Mr. David Zimmer	2371
Mr. Randy Hillier	2372
Mr. Peter Kormos	2372
Mr. Khalil Ramal	2378
Mr. Toby Barrett	2379
Mrs. Liz Sandals	2380
Mr. Bill Murdoch	2381
Mr. Dave Levac	2381
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2382
Mr. John Yakabuski	2383
Motion negatived	2384

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 28 September 2010 / Mardi 28 septembre 2010

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Business of the House

Mr. John Yakabuski	2339
Hon. Monique M. Smith	2339
Mr. Bruce Crozier	2340
Mr. Michael Prue	2340
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	2340

Immigrant services

Hon. Eric Hoskins	2340
Mr. Tim Hudak	2344
Mr. Michael Prue	2345
Debate deemed adjourned	2348

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Bruce Crozier	2348
Mr. Jeff Leal.....	2348
Hon. Margaret R. Best	2348
Mr. Dave Levac.....	2348
Hon. Monique M. Smith	2348
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	2348

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Smart meters

Mr. Tim Hudak	2348
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	2348

Smart meters

Mr. Tim Hudak	2349
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	2349

Hydro rates

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	2351
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	2351

Hydro rates

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	2352
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	2352

Smart meters

Mr. John Yakabuski	2353
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	2353

Automobile insurance

Mr. Peter Kormos.....	2353
Hon. Dwight Duncan	2353

Smart meters

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel	2354
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	2354

Community safety

Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	2354
Hon. Dalton McGuinty.....	2354
Hon. James J. Bradley	2355

Workplace safety

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	2355
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	2355

Renewable energy

Mr. Bill Mauro	2355
Hon. Brad Duguid	2356
Hon. Michael Gravelle	2356

Government accountability

Mr. John O'Toole.....	2356
Hon. Harinder S. Takhar	2356

Hydro rates

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	2357
Hon. Brad Duguid	2357

Workplace safety

Mr. David Oraziotti	2357
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	2357

Freedom of information

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	2358
Hon. John Milloy	2358

Laboratory services

Mr. Gilles Bisson	2358
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2359

Visitors

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	2359
--------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Dave Levac.....	2359
---------------------	------

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Salmon Spectacular fishing derby

Mr. Bill Murdoch	2359
------------------------	------

Human rights

Mr. Rosario Marchese	2359
----------------------------	------

Continued on inside back cover