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**Official Report  
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**Journal  
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**Monday 1 November 2010**

**Lundi 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 2010**

Speaker  
Honourable Steve Peters

Président  
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 November 2010

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 2010

*The House met at 1030.*

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

*Prayers.*

### INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. John Milloy:** I know members in this House are probably very familiar with Skills Canada, an organization that promotes trades among young people. One of the ways they do that is through a competition. Skills Canada Ontario is represented here today at Queen's Park, as well as the winners of the national Skills Canada competition that was held in Waterloo. These young individuals will be going on to represent Canada at the international skills competition in London, England.

I'd like to recognize them here today. They're over in the gallery. We have, first of all, Ian Cunningham, a director with Skills Canada Ontario, and Gail Smyth, executive director of Skills Canada. Then we have the student competitors: Tyler Hackney, Jonathan Sinke, Ryan Gomes, Benjamin Church, Adrian Schut and Tom Middlebro. We welcome them to Queen's Park today.

There's a reception tonight for Skills Canada-Ontario at Stop 33 at the Sutton Place. All members are welcome to celebrate Ontario's champions.

**Mr. Ernie Hardeman:** It gives me great pleasure to rise today to welcome the family of today's page captain, Eric O'Brien, from the great riding of Oxford. Here with us today at Queen's Park in the members' gallery are his mother, Kristine Hamilton, his father, Steve O'Brien, his brother Liam and his cousin Evan Samson. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park today.

**Hon. Carol Mitchell:** I'm very pleased to introduce Elle Doherty's father and sister, Lonny and Maya. Elle is our page from the beautiful riding of Huron-Bruce.

I also have in attendance my nephew Justin Jain and my daughter Jasmine Mitchell.

Welcome, all. It's a great day for Huron-Bruce.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I'd like to introduce Lucas DaSilva, who is here to watch question period on his day off from school today. Welcome, Lucas.

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** I'd like to take an opportunity to introduce His Worship Fernando Campos, mayor of Boticas in Tras Montes, in the northern region of Portugal. He's joined by his wife, Dona Graca, as well as Mr. Abel Barroso and Aldina Barroso. They're joined by Mr.

John Goncalves and Mrs. Idila Goncalves, who are the organizers of their visit, together with Mr. Raimundo Favas and Lucia Santos, long-time volunteers in our community. They were here this weekend to support Santa Casa da Misericordia de Boticas, and they were joined by Minister Peter Fonseca as well.

*Remarks in Portuguese.*

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, families in Ontario woke up this morning to find out that you've turned time-of-use smart meters on their heads; now they're being charged the highest use for energy between 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Obviously, it will hit families quite hard.

The additional surprise, we understand, that you have in store for Ontario families is an expansion of your already hidden and greedy hydro tax, which cost consumers some \$53 million last year.

Is it true, Minister, that you plan on expanding this greedy hydro tax to natural gas, just as we're heading into the winter heating season?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** As usual, the Leader of the Opposition is misinformed. The Ontario Energy Board came out with the regulated price plan for consumers. It was very clear, and it was just a number of weeks ago.

Time-of-use pricing for consumers on smart meters was adjusted as follows, and I suggest the Leader of the Opposition take note: Off-peak price decreases went from 5.3 cents to 5.1 cents per kilowatt hour; mid-peak did go up from 8 cents to 8.1 cents per kilowatt hour; on-peak prices remain unchanged. The estimated price impact for residential consumers on time of use will be a reduction of \$1.21 per month. I recognize that's not a lot, but nonetheless it is a reduction.

One would think that the Leader of the Opposition would recognize the importance of encouraging people to shift off of peak usage; how that saves the—

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

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Yet again, another promise by a McGuinty cabinet minister that hydro prices are going down. Quite frankly, families won't believe this promise, because every promise you've made on hydro prices has been broken. They're going through the roof.

Let me put this into perspective, Minister. Now, as we're heading toward the cooler winter season, you're increasing the cost of using energy in the mornings, as families are getting ready to go to school, and in the evenings as the kids come home for dinner and to do their homework. On top of that, in addition to the \$53-million tax grab you had on hydro bills, you're planning on putting this on natural gas. Millions and millions of Ontario families depend on natural gas to heat their homes. Minister, please tell us it's not true that you're going to slap down a brand new tax on natural gas just when the winter season is hitting.

1040

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Once again, the Leader of the Opposition is speculating, as he likes to do, trying to use fearmongering to consumers at a time when consumers need transparency. I'm looking forward to bringing forward the long-term energy plan for this province, which will provide that transparency, that certainty, and maybe take away some of the opportunities in which the Leader of the Opposition likes to engage in fearmongering and trying to ensure that consumers in fact don't know what actually is going on around the province.

What I can say is this: The Leader of the Opposition came forward with his own idea not long ago, an idea that he indicated would bring prices down. We've looked into it. His idea of providing options would do nothing but put prices up for consumers right across this province. They would increase administration costs; they would—

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

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** I appreciate that the minister says that he's looking forward to bringing forward his long-term energy plan. We're also looking forward to the Leafs finally winning the Stanley Cup. The problem is, we don't know just which one is going to come sooner.

I say to the minister, you are now, with your new smart meter time-of-use rates, these tax machines, actually telling families that they have to have the kids showered and ready for school before 7 a.m. When they get home, I guess they can hang out in the dark until they can do their homework after 9 p.m., with your new rates. And now, Minister, you are planning on bringing in an increase on taxes on natural gas, just as we're hitting the cold winter season.

You're saying that we're speculating; Minister, you gave yourself authority to do so in the legislation. We think you're going to use it. Yes or no: Are you planning another sneaky tax grab on natural gas bills just when we're hitting the winter season?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I'm not going to speculate, as the Leader of the Opposition would want me to do on that, in any way. What I will say is this, and this is the fact: The Leader of the Opposition would try to claim that he's proposing something that would save everybody money. Clearly, we've looked into it. It will not. What he's proposing would create confusion and uncertainty among consumers. What he's proposing would kill the benefits of time-of-use pricing while increasing its costs through

billing system changes and more administration, sinking the investments that we've made in smart meters. What he's proposing would increase the administrative burden on local distribution companies, driving up their costs and forcing them to recover that from consumers.

He says one thing in this Legislature, but when he finally comes out with something, it's very clear that he didn't think it through. The Leader of the Opposition, if we were to listen him today, would be putting up the rates of consumers right across this—

*Interjection.*

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

The member from Nepean will withdraw the comment she just made, please.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** Withdrawn.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** New question.

## TAXATION

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Back to the Minister of Energy: If your smart meter tax machines were such a good thing, then consumers would choose them. The Ontario PCs believe in giving Ontario families a choice. Whether they want to participate in the program or not, you want to force it down their throats.

But Minister, with all due respect, you seem to be trying to get around my question a bit here. It's a very simple, straightforward question. You have given yourself the authority to impose a new tax on natural gas just as we hit the winter season. Despite your advice to consumers to turn off the air conditioners in November to save on their time-of-use pricing, surely you understand that natural gas usage goes up in the winter time, when it tends to snow and get colder. Let me ask you, Minister, very directly: Will you, yes or no, bring in a new tax on natural gas in the province? Yes or no? Please say no.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I said earlier that all of our initiatives will be made very, very clear in the long-term energy plan. I'm not going to speculate on that idle speculation taking place over there. I can tell you that we have no plans to move forward in that direction, but I'm not going to speculate on that in any way.

What I will say is this: The Leader of the Opposition gets up in his place day in and day out and talks about his concern about rising energy rates, yet when he does come forward with some initiatives, they have the effect of increasing costs to consumers. In the same speech that he moved forward with his so-called option to consumers—and the only option it's going to involve is increasing rates to consumers—he also speculated on nuclear. He said that we should be purchasing nuclear units today. It would have cost us billions more dollars if we had taken his advice to buy nuclear—

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

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Perhaps I could, with respect to the minister, ask him to temporarily leave the fantasyland of his last number of questions and deal with the hard realities that Ontario families are facing today.

Under the McGuinty government, hydro bills are going through the roof. They're impacting quite hard on senior citizens and Ontario families. You've added an 8% increase with the HST now on hydro bills in the province. You brought forward a sneaky hydro tax that you have buried in the regulatory charges so it doesn't even appear directly on the bills. You've claimed these things are conservation initiatives, but it goes into the general revenue fund.

All of that is bad enough. All of that is hitting hard on Ontario families today. All I'm asking you is to just say no to another greedy tax grab on natural gas, particularly as we're heading into the winter season. Just say no.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** We've been very clear. In a time when we do have to increase investments to ensure that we deliver a strong, reliable and clean energy system, we're doing everything we can to bring those prices down. So let's be very clear about that. We're doing everything we can. We're making sure that our energy partners do everything they can to ensure that whatever increases they need to come forward with, it's only increases that are providing value for money.

We've had to come a long way and we've had to build up this energy system that was left in distress seven years ago when the previous government was not making the important investments in the system, when the previous government was not ensuring, in fact, that we had enough supply to meet the demand of Ontario families. We've had to make important investments to ensure that we provide the strong, reliable and clean energy system that—

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

**Mr. Tim Hudak:** Every time that the Premier wants to install another greedy tax grab, he tends to dress it up as an environmental initiative. We saw that with your eco tax grab that would slap a new tax on 9,000 items that families use each and every day, and I'm proud that the Ontario PCs stood on the side of Ontario families and fought that tax and caused you to back down.

Now we're taking up the fight again. We know that you have a plan to bring in an additional tax, not only on hydro bills, which you hide under the regulatory charges, but on natural gas as well. Minister, this is simply unaffordable to Ontario families. They cannot take any more of these hits on their pocketbooks by Premier McGuinty. Please tell us right here, right now, that you are cancelling your plans to slap a new tax on natural gas in the province of Ontario.

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Once again, the Leader of the Opposition has no idea what he's talking about. There's no such plan. He's speculating. It's idle speculation. It's the typical fearmongering on hydro rates that's been going on far too long, and that's why I'm looking very much forward to moving forward with our long-term energy plan. Our long-term energy plan—

*Interjections.*

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

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** They had their chance when they were in power, and what did they leave us? They did not

invest in a strong and modern energy system. They did not invest in a cleaner energy system. They did not invest in reliability. They were preoccupied with selling off hydro assets. Their experimentation with deregulation cost our consumers a billion dollars. Every time I look at my bill and see that debt retirement fund, I see that Leader of the Opposition's face—

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

## HYDRO RATES

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is for the Minister of Energy. The McGuinty government's new time-of-use hydro rates are kicking in today and families are getting ready to be whacked with another round of hydro bill hikes. Can the minister assure households that every single penny of their sky-high hydro bills is going to be put to good use?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I thank the leader of the opposition for the question. Obviously, when the Ontario Energy Board came out just a few weeks ago and indicated that indeed the regulated price plan would be small and modest decreases for consumers, this is what they said: Off-peak prices will be decreased from 5.3 cents to 5.1 cents. That's a decrease, not an increase, as the Leader of the Opposition, I think, would have people believe. Mid-peak price increases would go up from eight cents to 8.1 cents—a little bit; not very much—and on-peak prices would remain the same. The estimated bill impact for residential consumers of time-of-use would be a reduction of \$1.21 per consumer.

**1050**

We recognize that that's a modest reduction, but it's a far cry from the fearmongering of the leader of the third party.

We're doing everything we can to ensure that our consumers are getting value for money. We're working very hard with our—

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** What I specifically asked the minister was: Is every single penny going to be put to good use? That was my question.

Elections Ontario records show that the Ontario Liberal Party accepted thousands of dollars in donations from municipally owned utilities. Essex Power put nearly \$3,000 into Liberal Party coffers, while Thunder Bay Hydro made a donation to the Thunder Bay-Superior North Liberal riding association.

Why are families who are already feeling the squeeze funding the Ontario Liberal Party when they're paying their hydro bills?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** The leader of the opposition gets up day after day and criticizes the important investments that we're making to build a strong, reliable and cleaner system of energy. Just a few weeks ago, we took four coal units off of power, something we couldn't have

done—we couldn't have taken them out of our system without these important investments.

There was a time when the NDP stood for something. There was a time when the NDP believed in cleaner air, when the NDP believed in healthier outcomes for our kids and grandkids. There was a time when the NDP supported initiatives to get us off of coal, but day in and day out the NDP stand up and oppose the important investments we're making to ensure that we can get the system to where it needs to go.

I think they've lost their way. I think they've lost their principles. There was a day they stood for something. I think today—

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** There's more local utility largesse flowing into Liberal coffers. Hydro ratepayers in Oakville made a generous \$15,000 donation to the Ontario Liberals, and Sudbury hydro customers helped out the governing party, too.

Why should Ontario families believe that their skyrocketing hydro bills will go to new electricity infrastructure when they see tens of thousands of dollars going straight to the Liberal Party?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Once again, the leader of the opposition gets up and—it was only about a month or two ago when she got up in this Legislature to give us figures that were 500% wrong.

I think it's important that we talk about the things that are important to Ontarians, things that used to be important to the NDP. Just to show you how far the NDP has strayed, let me quote from Dr. Rick Smith, executive director of Environmental Defence, when he said this: "More clean energy jobs in Ontario isn't just good news for workers.... It's good news for everyone who wants cleaner air and lower emissions. Across this province, we're creating jobs and replacing old, polluting energy like coal with clean, modern energy like wind and solar."

He goes on to say, "People who want to go backwards"—and I think he's pointing his finger over there—"and use less renewable energy need to be honest.... They're fighting job creation. Energy companies are hiring people in Ontario as a direct result of Ontario"—

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

## HYDRO RATES

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is also to the Minister of Energy. Families are telling us that they simply can't afford to pay any more. Every single penny of their household budget counts, and they don't want to see those pennies funding the Ontario Liberal Party.

The new smart meter bills kick in today. Why are rates increasing at the exact same time when families are busy preparing to get off to work and school in the morning and when they're getting home from work and school in the afternoon?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Whatever happened to the days when the NDP cared about cleaner air? Whatever happened to the days when the NDP cared about the health of ourselves and our children? Whatever happened to the days when the NDP believed in energy conservation—or at least they talked about it. When they were in office, they actually cut conservation programs, but at least they used to talk about it.

Today, they stand in this place, day after day, and criticize the important investments we're making in conservation, the important investments we're making that are allowing us to get off of dirty coal, create cleaner air and help ensure that we have healthier outcomes for ourselves and our children.

There's no question at all: The third party has lost their way. I can say that when I look at comments from the steelworkers, a group that used to support that party, comments that I'll be happy to speak to in my supplementary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Victoria Morrison of Ajax tells me, "To live with the new rates under the smart meter plan, I will have to learn to sleep all day, getting up at 9 p.m. and going to bed at 7 a.m. If not, the cost of my meals and keeping warm, having light on a winter day, will cost me two to three times more."

Why are seniors like Ms. Morrison being hit with sky-high rates at exactly the time when they need to use electricity the most?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I'm still waiting to see the leader of the third party's next newsletter. I'm sure by now the leader of the third party is very aware of our energy and property tax credit, a tax credit that will go to two thirds of Ontario seniors, a tax credit that will go to 2.8 million lower- and middle-income Ontarians, a tax credit that's going to help provide relief when it comes to rising energy costs. I'm sure the leader of the third party would want her constituents to be aware of this important tax credit, because it does provide relief.

We know that Ontario families have gone through a rough time when it comes to the global recession, and we know that rising energy rates are challenging to Ontario families. That's why we're working very hard with Ontario families. We're working very hard with the Minister of Finance, who brought forward this energy property tax credit to provide relief.

We're going to keep working with Ontario families, but I would ask the leader of the third party to start dealing with facts and start ensuring that her—

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Joyce Sloat and her husband are nearing retirement. She writes, "We have electric heat in our home.... I have been environmentally responsible by using a clothesline to dry our laundry for 36 years! [But] my pockets have bottoms and the McGuinty HST has them blowing in the wind!" This government has hit women like Joyce with hike after hike after hike. She doesn't want to pay the HST on hydro, and she certainly

doesn't want the money that she does pay going into the pockets of the Ontario Liberal Party.

Why is the Ontario government hitting her with higher rates the second she comes home from work and refusing to give her a break by simply taking the HST off her hydro bill?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I spoke earlier about the fact that our energy and property tax credits will be going out to the benefit of two thirds of Ontario seniors, and the very constituents that the leader of the third party is talking about will benefit from that.

But maybe the leader of the third party might want to take advice from her own critic, when he said not to “ignore the economic opportunities that are presented by conservation and renewable energy—not to mention the enormous costs if we do nothing. Science is not on their side. Nor is public opinion.” I think that's something we would certainly agree with. The member's own critic is standing in stark contrast to the positions that she has taken in this Legislature day after day. She has lost her way. She's driving a wedge between herself and the environmentalists, she's driving a wedge between herself and the Steelworkers, and she's even driving a wedge between herself and her own environment critic.

#### SMART METERS

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** My question is for the energy minister. While Premier McGuinty sold his smart-meter experiment by telling Ontario families that time-of-use would save them money, 60% of those with smart meters say they're paying more. This morning, Ontario families woke up to discover that Premier McGuinty will make them pay even more for time-of-use rates that are the highest between 7 to 11 a.m. and 5 to 9 p.m., when people are getting home from work. The Premier's advice to people who are struggling with skyrocketing hydro bills? Turn down the air conditioners this winter.

Why doesn't Premier McGuinty understand that Ontario families do not have an unlimited ability to pay for all of his expensive energy experiments?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I said it before, and I'm going to say it again, because it bears repeating: The Ontario Energy Board regulates the price of energy. They made it very clear a number of weeks ago, when they indicated that off-peak prices would be decreasing from 5.3 cents to 5.1 cents, that mid-peak prices would be increasing—but it's very small, 8 cents to 8.1 cents—and on-peak prices would remain the same. The estimated bill impact for residential consumers for time-of-use would be going down—not up, but down—by \$1.21.

1100

Those are the facts. That's what consumers deserve to be hearing from the opposition. We welcome their constructive ideas. We've had to make some transformational changes in the energy sector because we've had to shift it from the distress it was in when they were in power to building a strong, reliable and clean energy system. We still have more work to do, and certainly we

would welcome constructive ideas, but the petty things that they're coming up with now—

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

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** These are important issues. Our PC leader has called for Ontario families to be given a choice between flat-rate hydro use and time-of-use pricing. When you add the cost of smart meters, delivery charges, debt retirement charges, regulatory charges and global adjustment in HST to the 9.9 cents per kilowatt hour Premier McGuinty charges during peak hours, Ontario families pay substantially more for hydro than in California and Florida, where families are given a choice.

When will Premier McGuinty realize he does not have a more intelligent understanding than Ontario families and give them a real break on their skyrocketing hydro bills?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** The opposition continues to put out information and comments that are just designed for fearmongering. Let's stick to the facts. The fact is that the Ontario Energy Board came forward with what amounts to a decrease of \$1.21 per month when it comes to consumers. That's good news for consumers.

We know that there's still work to do. We know there are still investments to be made. We're going to ensure that we don't do what they did seven years ago. We're not going to leave consumers in the lurch, where they didn't have enough power to provide the support they need in their households for their families. We're going to ensure that we continue to make investments in the system that ensure we have a reliable system, unlike the system that they left us seven years ago that was in an absolute state of decay. We're going to ensure that we don't do what they did, and that is to let the use of coal go up 127% during their days in office. By the year 2014—

#### EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

**Mr. Michael Prue:** My question is to the Minister of Labour. A few months ago, a Toronto server, who was being forced to share her tips with her manager, asked the minister to change the law to protect her and thousands of other servers across Ontario who are being ripped off.

The minister responded, and I quote him, “Tips are not wages. The manner in which tips are split between employees and employers is determined by the two parties.”

In view of the unanimous support given by MPPs in this House on Thursday and editorial support on Bill 114, will the Minister of Labour now tell us whether he still supports the rip-off of servers?

**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** First, I'd like to thank the member for introducing his private member's bill and allowing all members here to engage in this very important debate.

I think I speak for all of us when I say that our waiters and waitresses, our bartenders and hostesses do an amazing job, a commendable job for our hospitality industry. These are good, hard-working men and women. The type

of service they provide—having spoken to many different establishments, managers and owners understand that having competent, caring and well-compensated staff is the equation to success when it comes to any of the businesses within this industry.

I'm very proud of the record of this government when it comes to protecting our employees. We've made many changes to the Employment Standards Act—

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

**Mr. Michael Prue:** The minister just doesn't get it. Tens of thousands of restaurant workers in Ontario are being ripped off by their bosses. They're forced, under pain of losing their jobs, to pay with their tips. We learned that this situation is spreading, and more and more workers will face this extortion if we don't put the brakes on this practice right now.

Will this government do the right thing to protect all low-wage servers and immediately take steps to ensure the swift passage of Bill 114, or, in the alternative, bring in your own bill to do the same?

**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** We take the rights of hard-working men and women in Ontario very seriously. Again, that's why we have made significant changes to the Employment Standards Act.

If any restaurant employee, hotel employee, any employee in Ontario feels that they have been mistreated, I do ask that they contact the Ministry of Labour so our officials can investigate.

I think the member fails to remember that after nine long years of not seeing one cent added to the minimum wage, this party has increased that minimum wage every single year to—right now in Ontario, where those members voted against that, we have the highest minimum wage of any province in Canada. It's something that we're proud of. We will continue to fight for the workers of Ontario.

#### ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** I have a question for the Minister of Energy. Clean, renewable hydroelectricity is an important part of Ontario's energy supply mix. In northern Ontario, water in particular is an essential source of electricity needed to power our communities, industry, hospitals and schools.

Many of the more remote communities would not have power at all if not for the investments being made to enhance our hydroelectric generating capacity in the north.

Can the minister reaffirm the government's commitment to hydroelectricity as a critical element in powering northern Ontario?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Absolutely. I thank the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for the question. I can assure him of this government's commitment to clean, renewable hydro power and our commitment to continuing to invest in energy reliability in northern Ontario.

In fact, I can tell him of an exciting new development on the Upper Mattagami River near Timmins. Ontario

Power Generation has been wanting to refurbish and enhance the aging hydro infrastructure on the Mattagami River for quite some time. Some of it was approaching 100 years old.

Just last week, thanks to the investments made by this government, the fully refurbished and enhanced Sandy Falls hydro station came into service. This new hydro station will produce 30 kilowatt hours of clean, renewable energy every year, enough to power 3,000 homes in northeastern Ontario.

Revitalizing Sandy Falls is just one of a number of large hydro projects under way on the Mattagami River. I'm happy to expand on that in the supplementary.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Michael A. Brown:** Getting power to the communities in the north is vital and certainly no small undertaking; even better when the power can be produced locally and renewably.

It is well known that the investments the government is making in modernizing the electricity system and enhancing our generating capacity from clean, renewable resources like hydroelectricity are creating thousands of jobs across Ontario.

Can the minister tell the House: In terms of jobs, what sort of impact do these projects have on northern Ontario?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I'm glad the member brought up job creation, because, unlike the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party, it's something that we care very greatly about, especially in the north.

I can tell the member that the development on the Upper Mattagami River, including Sandy Falls, is creating 500 jobs in northern Ontario. The expansions taking place on the Lower Mattagami River are creating 800 jobs. That's 1,300 jobs in Timmins-James Bay on the Mattagami River alone.

Not once have I heard the member from Timmins-James Bay or his leader utter a single word about the importance of these jobs in that community.

The leader of the third party clearly is not interested in job creation, opportunities for First Nations or energy reliability in the north. She's interested in two things: fearmongering and short-term political opportunity, and putting that ahead of cleaner air and job creation in the north. Ontarians deserve much better than that.

#### TAXATION

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** My question is to the Minister of Revenue. In response to a media interview last week, one of your colleagues demonstrated how out of touch your colleagues are in regard to your portfolio. The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is so out of touch—

**Interjection:** How out of touch is she?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** —that last week in a media interview, she said cutting the HST for everyone would only help the rich, who can afford this tax. That's news to Ontario families, who work hard every day and are struggling to pay the \$1,000 a year the HST adds to their family bills.

Was the member relying on talking points from your office for her out-of-touch comments, or were they really her own?

**Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis:** I thank the member very much for the question. First, let me just say how great a job our member from Lambton–Kent does. The member as well as the government—we are here about creating jobs. That's why we introduced the HST. That's why we have a comprehensive tax package. In fact, while we know 93% of all Ontarians have seen a personal income tax cut, we know that we are helping Ontario families with tax cuts and tax credits. It's about more jobs for Ontarians, it's about building a stronger economy, and we are committed to continue going on that road.

1110

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** My supplementary to the minister: Obviously, the McGuinty Liberals also show how out of touch they are when this same member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex tried to say that the federal government made her and her colleagues vote for the HST. Ontario families know that she and 70 other McGuinty Liberals put the Premier's priorities over their own. They are unhappy about paying \$1,000 a year more for the HST. Now you're scrambling to come up with gimmicks to ease the pain of Premier McGuinty's HST tax grabs.

But if anyone needed more proof of how out of touch you've become, you expect to be thanked for taking away \$1,000 and then giving Ontario families \$50 back. How did you and your Liberal colleagues get so far out of touch?

**Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis:** Again, I wonder if the member had the opportunity to speak with Patricia Davidson, the federal MP from Sarnia, who I think voted for the HST. She voted for the HST. That's a smart member.

But let me talk a little bit more about our comprehensive tax package. It's about creating jobs; that's what we are committed to. It's about tax cuts. It's about tax credits. It's about building a business environment that is competitive. We want our businesses to succeed so that they can have more money to put into innovation and more jobs. That's what this is about, and I hope the member would support building on 600,000 more jobs for the province of Ontario.

#### COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, in 2008—October 2008, in fact—your government passed legislation that gave part-time professors and support staff the right to organize. Minister Milloy, in the committee of estimates, said that he was very proud of this legislation. Indeed, many ministers are nodding in their pride of having passed that legislation two years ago.

Yet today, more than a year after thousands of workers signed membership cards and voted on unionization, the

ballots remain in sealed boxes, uncounted. What happened to that pride of yours that you had in passing that legislation? When will the ballots be counted?

**Hon. John Milloy:** To the Minister of Labour.

**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** I know the member knows, or ought to know, that this is before the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The Ontario Labour Relations Board, as a tribunal, will work through this process, working with the parties, assisting the parties with this.

The Ministry of Labour is very proud of the labour relations that we have in Ontario. They have been very effective. Actually, right now in Ontario, we have the best labour relations record that we have had in the last 35 years. That speaks volumes for the way that the parties handle themselves.

But whenever there is a dispute, when there is something that parties cannot see eye to eye on, we do have the Ontario Labour Relations Board, and this is where this matter sits today.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Both ministers are abdicating their responsibility. In my mind, it doesn't speak to the pride in the bill that his government passed. The colleges are, in my mind, violating your bill. They are flouting your bill; your bill is being circumvented by the colleges.

Frankly, both of these ministers are a little coy. Minister Milloy, in particular, is very modest about his authority. According to another act, the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, the minister has the authority to simply order the colleges to withdraw their objections to the vote. Here's a way for the minister to restore pride in his bill and take responsibility. Will Minister Milloy make the order and end this debacle?

**Hon. Peter Fonseca:** As Minister of Labour, I take my responsibilities very seriously, and I respect the process that we have in the province of Ontario. The process allows the parties, if they have a dispute, if they have a conflict or something that needs to be worked through, to take that to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. That's where the matter sits today. I would hope that the member would not play politics with this and would allow the process to work itself through.

In this province, we have very stable labour relations. We have excellent labour relations. I think that's because of the model that we've set up. Please allow the process to work its way through, I say to the member.

#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As you know, Ottawa Centre includes Carleton University, has the University of Ottawa situated next door and has Algonquin College and La Cité collégiale within a very short distance. As such, I have many students who live in my riding, and my constituents are generally very attuned to the importance of post-secondary education as a key component of a prosperous and well-equipped Ontario.

Minister, I hear a lot from my community, and students especially, about rising tuition fees and their con-

cerns that post-secondary education is becoming unaffordable, especially for those with limited financial resources.

Can the minister assure my constituents that a post-secondary education, especially in this critical time as we see such a strong need for skilled workers in the 21st-century economy, remains accessible to those with limited financial means but also affordable for those who are making a smart investment in their future?

**Hon. John Milloy:** I want to thank the member for a very important question and for his advocacy on behalf of post-secondary education, particularly students and their families.

I'm very, very proud that Ontario boasts one of the most generous student assistance programs in the country. This spring, we announced further enhancements and an expansion of the program, totalling some \$81 million. I've had an opportunity to go out and meet with student groups who have been very receptive to the changes.

Just to share with the Legislature what some of these changes are: Under the new plan, we provided more assistance for tuition, living costs, book supplies and equipment; we're allowing students to keep more of the money they earn from part-time jobs; we're providing a no-interest, no-payment period on student loans for six months after graduation; we're providing additional support for married students and students with children; and we've introduced a new grant for part-time students. As well—

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

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** I think it is valuable for us to consider another factor in this discussion, one that I feel is equally important to those engaged in or looking forward to a post-secondary education. It is important to consider the enhanced educational experience our students are getting because of massive investments in the facilities and classrooms of our colleges and universities. It's obvious that a learner in a modern and well-equipped facility will ultimately benefit more than a learner using an outdated, crowded or dilapidated setting. There's little doubt that students are savvy consumers. They know when they get value for their dollar.

Minister, could you tell us what investments our government has been making in improving the learning environment in Ontario's colleges and universities and how this will continue to enhance the value of a post-secondary education in the new economy of the 21st century?

**Hon. John Milloy:** The honourable member is correct: The bricks-and-mortar side of the equation is equally important. Our 2010 budget confirmed the provincial investment of some \$780 million over two years to help upgrade and build new facilities at our colleges and universities.

For the Ottawa area, which the member is proud to represent, I'm sure he's aware that in 2009, as part of this funding, our government provided over \$26 million to Carleton University's interdisciplinary academic build-

ing. The University of Ottawa received \$50 million in provincial funding for the Vanier Hall renovation and tower addition. In addition, Algonquin College received \$35 million for their Environmental Demonstration Centre for Construction Trades and Building Bridges, and La Cité collégiale received \$13 million for their Emergency Services Training Centre 911 Institute. These are all great examples of investments which are paying off—

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

#### PLANT CLOSURE

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** To the Acting Premier: On September 30, I encouraged the Premier to pick up the phone and to call Smucker's after news that the company would be closing its Bick's Dunnville processing facility as well as its Delhi tank farm. These closures will devastate the town of Dunnville, as well as farmers who grow cucumbers, peppers, beets, onions, cauliflower and tomatoes.

1120

It's been a month. Has your Premier made the call to Smucker? Has he picked up the phone to talk to other food processors who may be interested in this state-of-the-art tank farm and the processing facility? My question, Acting Premier: What progress is being made on this?

**Hon. Dwight Duncan:** To the Minister of Agriculture.

**Hon. Carol Mitchell:** Thank you very much for the question. The McGuinty government understands that any plant closing has a significant impact on both the employees' family and community. We continue to support improved competitiveness in Ontario's food and processing sector. We have made significant investments through our rural economic development program, and we continue to work with the growth and expansion through our Open Ontario plan.

I look forward to even further expanding on the investments that we have made with our processors, specifically in rural Ontario and the conversations that we have had. But I want to assure the member from across the way that we have been on the ground working in the past and we are working today. Those calls have been made.

I'm very proud of the—

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

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Well, Minister of Agriculture, this reminds me of what your McGuinty government allowed to happen in 2008 with the peach and pear canning operations in St. Davids. CanGro closed shop after more than 100 years because they discovered that in McGuinty Ontario, it's more efficient to can fruit from China.

Back to Smucker: Are you offering assistance through the rural economic development fund or your so-called job creation funds? In the last year, your government has sat by while hard-working people in my area have been kicked in the teeth, not only by Smucker but by two separate, massive labour disruptions at US Steel, a lock-

out at the former Heckett and plans to close down OPG Nanticoke.

How do you expect hard-working families in Haldimand–Norfolk to survive when you oversee these massive job losses, or do you just not care anymore?

**Hon. Carol Mitchell:** I just want to say that there could not be anything further from the truth. We understand how significantly it does affect the community and, specifically, the employees.

I want to say that \$290 million was invested in the food processing sector. We understand how critical it is. It's the second-largest industry in Ontario, and that's why those investments have been made. I want to speak specifically to the \$290 million. That has retained and created 6,200 jobs. I am very proud of the investment that we have made on this side of the House. We know that there was not the investment made from that side of the House.

We recognize there's more work to do, and that, quite frankly, is why we have the Open Ontario plan. The investments have been made in the—

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

#### TAXATION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My question is to the Minister of Energy. Middlesex Power Distribution customers in the Dutton area are seeing red. They're facing a double whammy of hikes in hydro bills: Next year, they're going to be paying more as a result of the new time-of-use billing, and today, they're going to be whacked after the Ontario Energy Board approved the 16% increase to the distribution portion of their hydro bill.

Why won't the minister give Dutton-area families a break by taking the HST off of hydro?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** Here we go again: the leader of the third party getting up and not supporting investments that are being made in infrastructure.

Yes, we know that energy prices are going up, and they're going up because local distribution companies have had to put greater investments in their infrastructure to ensure the reliability of the systems right across Ontario. One of the reasons they have to do that—and the leader of the third party may know it—is because the Tories froze prices back when they were in power. Those investments could not be made, so many of these local distribution companies are still playing catch-up.

But I suggest that the leader of the third party, before she gets up again, listen to the steelworkers of Ontario when they said this: “From steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels, workers can support their families by working in clean energy....”

These are important investments that are being made across this province, investments that the old NDP would have—

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** The hydro bill spike that Dutton-area families are facing is just plain unfair, especially

as the cold weather arrives, and the McGuinty HST adds insult to injury. Families in the Dutton area—in fact, families all across this province—deserve a break.

This afternoon, the McGuinty government can support the NDP's motion to take the HST off hydro. Will the minister commit to hard-hit families in Dutton and elsewhere in the province that this government will vote for the motion that we're debating this afternoon?

**Hon. Brad Duguid:** I think once again, the leader of the third party needs to inform her constituents of what's being done to mitigate many of the increases that are taking place.

Whether it's the Ontario energy and property tax credit, which is going to two thirds of Ontario seniors and 2.8 million low- and middle-income Ontarians across this province, whether it's the 93% of Ontarians who are receiving income tax cuts in the range of about an average of \$200 per family, a number of measures have been taken through tax credits and income tax cuts to ensure that we mitigate those initiatives.

But what the leader of the opposition needs to do is ensure that her constituents know how important the investments we're making are in ensuring that we build a strong, reliable and clean energy system. That's what she's forgotten; that's what her constituents deserve to know. She should come clean with her constituents and—

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

#### AIR-RAIL LINK

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** My question is to the Minister of Transportation. As part of the Georgetown South expansion project, GO is building a tunnel in the Weston community. The local community has been supportive of this tunnel, as it is a significant part of the improvements that have been made to the original project. The Weston community will also benefit from a new GO station, increased GO service and access to the air-rail link.

Last Thursday, I participated with constituents in an open house organized by Metrolinx to consult the community on the design of the Weston tunnel. At the meeting, concerns were expressed about possible changes to the tunnel.

Could the minister please update my constituents on the status of the tunnelling project—have there been any changes?—and provide assurance that community members will continue to be fully informed as construction proceeds?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I want to thank the member opposite for her advocacy. She has been a real champion for her community, and many of the improvements have been made because she's worked so closely with us.

In fact, over the summer, I was able to go and look at the project with the member for York South–Weston and we were able to see the positive impact of this project on the community.

Since the summer, because of her advocacy and because of her work with us, Metrolinx has been involved

in changing the way they communicate with the community. There's been extensive community engagement. To date, two community offices have been opened, Strachan and Weston, with on-site staff to answer questions. A regular e-news bulletin goes out to update community members; 10,000 flyers have been delivered to neighbourhood homes; and just last week, as the member opposite said, there was a community meeting to talk about the tunnel.

Metrolinx will continue to communicate with the community, and the member opposite will work on that with us.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mrs. Laura Albanese:** As part of the design process for the Weston tunnel, last week nine homeowners in the village of Weston received a letter from Metrolinx that caused them much concern. The letter indicated that as part of the construction of the tunnel, the properties would be acquired.

Some of the affected constituents, whom I visited and talked to personally, expressed the strong desire not to leave the community. To put it in their own words, their property represents much more than just a residence. It is their home, where they've lived for 20, 30 years. They've raised their families, built relationships and made friends.

Just last Thursday, the minister committed to having Metrolinx contact the affected homeowners to discuss their options. Can the minister tell us whether Metrolinx will be in touch in writing with my constituents about options and next steps?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I'm really happy to be able to clarify the situation. Over the weekend, a follow-up letter, which did clarify what was happening, was handed to all of the affected homeowners. A member of the GO Transit community relations team spoke personally with the majority of the affected homeowners. As with similar situations, GO Transit will be communicating in writing the specific options available to each homeowner. I know you understand that each situation will be somewhat different, but each homeowner needs to get those options in writing, and as the situations evolve, that will happen.

1130

I want to assure the member and the House that the homeowners in question will have ample opportunity to talk about their personal circumstances with GO Transit, and we've clarified that. As I've said earlier, it's critical to us that community engagement be an ongoing part of what GO and Metrolinx do in this community. That's what's happening.

As I've said, they'll be communicating to each homeowner in writing—

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

#### CONSUMER PROTECTION

**Mr. Frank Klees:** To the Minister of Transportation: In June of this year, I alerted the minister to the fact that

a Scarborough Toyota dealership had issued a safety certificate signed by the dealership's mechanic, even though subsequent independent inspections confirmed that the vehicle was unfit and should never have been issued a safety certificate. Despite the evidence, the ministry claims that it is unable to pursue the issue because of a six-month statute of limitations on Highway Traffic Act charges.

I trust the minister will agree that this is an unacceptable response. Will she agree to direct her ministry staff to fully investigate this matter, to ensure the integrity of the safety standards certificate process in our province?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** As I have said, I appreciate the member opposite bringing forward his concerns. I can't comment on an individual case. I know he understands that.

The motor vehicle inspection program has been in place for many years, before 2003. I believe the member opposite was a Minister of Transportation at one point.

The reality is that if there are mechanics and garages out there that are not following the rules, then obviously there are laws in place to deal with that.

We recognize that there needs to be oversight. We've established a call centre where consumers can contact us with their complaints about garages. We're making sure that mechanics actually have the credentials that they're telling us they have. If we can't verify their credentials, we won't let them issue safety standard certificates. So we've taken action to deal with some of the issues that the member opposite is raising.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Frank Klees:** Actually, the reason I'm raising the question is because the ministry is refusing to take action.

There are two serious issues here. First of all, we have a car dealership that is issuing certificates fraudulently. The integrity of the entire inspection system is at stake here. But the more important issue is that the ministry is unwilling to pursue the matter and is apparently content to simply allow this dealership and others, obviously, to continue to do business in an inappropriate manner.

How can the minister justify her ministry's washing their hands of this issue? Will she agree to order a full investigation into this case and the dealership's business practices, and also order a comprehensive review of the entire system in this province that is being used under the safety standards certificate process?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** Garages that break the law can be fined up to \$20,000 and have their licences revoked. There are already very stiff penalties in place. It's a regime of—

*Interruption.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** That's the second phone that has gone off. I'd just ask members to make sure—they should be.

Minister?

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** It's a regime of regulation and legislation that is very rigorous, and as I said, the member opposite is very aware of it because he was a Minister of Transportation and these rules have been in place since before 2003.

As I said before, I cannot comment on a specific case. I will certainly take the issue under advisement. I appreciate him raising it again.

In Ontario, we have some of the safest roads in North America. The safety regime that we have in place is really second to none. I think that the member opposite raising questions about a specific case when there are rules in place, when the law is being followed, really only serves to undermine.

Thank you for raising it. I will certainly take it under advisement, but I think—

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

#### COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, your government has told the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre in Ignace that there will be no increase in their annual budget this year. At the same time, the landlord that owns the building that the community health centre works out of has told them there's going to be a 100% increase in the rent—a \$100,000-a-year increase in the rent.

In a small community health centre such as this, that means cutting two positions; that means cutting health services for the community of Ignace and Savant Lake. These communities have no other real option. Why is your government forcing the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre to cut health services in the community?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** I will be more than happy to look into the specifics of this situation. What I can tell you is that we have led the largest-ever expansion of community health centres across this province. It is a model that serves a very important niche in many communities. It is a model that has really served communities extremely well.

I will look at this particular situation, but to the best of my knowledge—I will undertake to look at the specifics of this situation.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Supplementary?

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I'm asking the minister to do that because at the same time that your ministry is telling the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre there's no increase in their annual budget, your government, through the Ontario Realty Corp., is telling them you're going to raise the rent \$100,000 a year. One arm of the government says, "No increase in the budget"; the other arm of the government says, "We're going to increase your rent by \$100,000 a year."

I think any reasonable person would say that is absurd. You have to know this will force them to cut full-time services at the health care centre. You have to know that it's not an answer to go two and a half hours to Thunder Bay. They'd be told, "No doctors there."

What are you going to do to fix this absurd situation, where your government is forcing them to cut health care services?

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** As I said to the member opposite, I will look into this particular situation and find out what is actually going on there.

One thing we do know for sure is, when the NDP was in power they cut medical school spots by 13%. Thanks to the action of that government—and the member opposite was sitting around the table at the time—we've lost 228 potential doctors, 568 overall. We have done exactly the opposite. We've expanded medical school spaces. In fact, we built a new medical school in the north that is training doctors today to support the north tomorrow.

Last week I was very pleased to announce we've now added one million Ontarians to—

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

#### MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members of the House to wish the Leader of the Opposition a happy birthday today. Happy Birthday.

#### NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Beaches–East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Labour concerning the practice of tip-outs. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs concerning Smucker's closing the Dunnville processing and Delhi tank farm. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

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

*The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.*

#### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

##### ROBERT RUNCIMAN

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I'm proud to rise today to recognize a man who certainly needs no introduction in this chamber. On Thursday, I will attend the Brockville and District Chamber of Commerce awards night, where it will be my honour to present Senator Bob Runciman with the organization's 2010 Citizen of the Year Award. It's a long-overdue recognition for a man whose service to the community spans more than three decades. In that time, Senator Runciman has often, without any publicity, worked to make Brockville and Leeds–Grenville a better place for all of us.

As a former member of his staff, I know that Bob didn't care if he got any credit for helping an important project get finished. He just wanted it done and wouldn't rest until it was. Typically, he shied away from any personal glory upon learning he'd even earned the chamber's award, telling a reporter that his first thought was that his late father, Sandy, really deserved it.

As you know, Senator Runciman spent 29 years on both sides of this chamber, where his reputation as a tenacious debater and skilled orator won him the respect of all MPPs from all parties. Since being appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the red chamber is getting used to the mad dog we all know and love.

I'm sure my colleagues here at Queen's Park will join me in congratulating Bob and his wife, Jeannette, on this most deserved honour.

### MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

**Mr. Paul Miller:** I first want to congratulate all of the successful candidates in last Monday's province-wide municipal elections and thank every candidate for making the commitment to run for elected office.

In Hamilton, we have a new mayor, Bob Bratina, and some new city councillors, including, from my riding of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Brenda Johnson, the new councillor for ward 11, and Alex Johnstone, the new trustee for wards 11 and 12.

I'm very pleased to offer my special congratulations to the new public school trustee for ward 5, Todd White, who is my constituency assistant. Todd ran an extremely well-organized campaign, knocking on every door in ward 5. He did an excellent job and deserves this win, which is an even bigger win for the parents and school-children of ward 5.

In this time of excessive job losses and economic downturn, I'm looking forward to working with the new city council to bring new industry and new employment programs to Hamilton. We have lots of work ahead of us, and our collaborative efforts will be needed to start Hamilton turning that economic recovery corner.

### SUMMERSTOWN TRAILS

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I rise in the House today to announce that Summerstown Trails in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has received a provincial grant of \$36,515 through the healthy communities funding. This fund plays a key role in helping the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport achieve its vision of healthy communities working together and Ontarians leading healthy and active lives.

The Summerstown Trails were constructed over 30 years ago by the Ministry of Natural Resources and have been enjoyed in all seasons by cross-country skiers, hikers and bikers.

With the recent funding, Summerstown Trails will be purchasing 28 pairs of children's snowshoes and 38 pairs of cross-country skis, boots and poles, as well as 10 pairs

of adults' snowshoes. Their goal is to introduce cross-country skiing to children in the hope that they will continue the activity as adults.

I wish to congratulate ski enthusiasts Iris and Stanley Swerdfeger for their extraordinary volunteer work at the Summerstown trail in their community of South Glengarry. It is through their work with the township and others, and a handful of local volunteers, that the trails have been properly maintained and groomed since they were created.

The funding will also help to fund new grooming equipment and a new snowmobile to replace two aging machines.

The October 22 announcement displays the commitment the McGuinty government has for the health and well-being of citizens of eastern Ontario, my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and indeed all Ontarians.

### XOGEN TECHNOLOGIES INC.

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I'm pleased to rise today to congratulate Xogen Technologies in my riding of Dufferin–Caledon for being named one of four finalists for the Mind to Market Award.

The Mind to Market Award is presented annually to recognize outstanding research collaboration between industry and an academic research team that results in successful commercialization.

Xogen Technologies, based in Orangeville, has a patented technology that treats raw waste water using an electric process that not only eliminates biosolids but also requires a much smaller footprint than conventional treatment approaches, thereby lowering capital costs. As a by-product, the process produces a mixture of hydrogen and oxygen gas that can be used to generate energy through combustion or a fuel cell, energy that can be sold back to the grid or reused to help further reduce costs. Their patented technology has attracted international interest, with inquiries coming from Washington, Seattle and Malaysia.

Xogen has made a point of keeping jobs local, as all of the technicians they have hired have been from the Orangeville area.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to meet with Xogen's CEO, Angella Hughes, and had a tour of their facility. I was impressed with their innovation and goal to bring more jobs to the community.

I'd like to again congratulate the management team and the board of directors for being one of the four outstanding organizations nominated for this prestigious award.

### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** Just recently, I was ecstatic to hear that Ontario has hit an important milestone: one million more being served by a family doctor than had access in 2003. That is the equivalent of finding a doctor for 16 people every hour, which was not the case under the previous Conservative government.

Today, 94% of Ontarians over the age of 16 have a family doctor. In order to do this, the McGuinty government has increased investments in health care.

We have hired 21% more internationally trained doctors and have created 10,000 new nursing positions.

We have expanded our MedsCheck program by adding three new programs for seniors, long-term-care residents and those with diabetes.

We have built new hospitals like the one in Sioux Lookout, which will provide essential health services and create 300 new jobs.

These outstanding statistics did not exist under the previous government, and they will disappear because, if elected, the Leader of the Opposition has a plan to cut \$3 billion from front-line health care annually.

Ontario families understand that when it comes to health care, there's only one party that has been clear and unwavering in support of our publicly funded health care system, and that is the McGuinty government and Ontario Liberals.

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#### LANDFILL

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I'm very proud to say that a large part of my riding of Durham is made up of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt and is home to many gravel pits that have provided aggregate for Ontario and the GTA for decades.

One specific concern in my riding today is located at site 13471 on Lakeridge Road, the border between Uxbridge and Port Perry, where, despite a stop-work order issued by the township of Scugog, the company Earthworx has continued to bring in commercial fill. The municipality simply lacks the resources to police the site appropriately.

Now that many of these sites have been abandoned or emptied, owners are turning to commercial fill operations to fill them back up, or site reclamation. Communities in my riding are looking for a new economy and opportunities. They want to do the right thing but do not want to become a dumping ground for contaminated fill.

This is an issue where the Minister of the Environment has a very important role to perform. The worry is the lack of enforcement and that contaminated fill may be mixed with clean fill in order to, if you will, distort the soil testing that's being done.

I have spoken directly with and have called on the Minister of the Environment and this government to examine the issues surrounding the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt, not just in words but actions, surrounding commercial fill operations, and to set up proper guidelines to ensure residents no longer have to worry about the groundwater being contaminated by inappropriate activities on the moraine.

#### ACTION ONTARIO

**Ms. Helena Jaczek:** Chronic pain affects nearly 20% of Ontarians, and 60% of those are over the age of 65.

Today, I had the opportunity to meet with members of Action Ontario, as have many of my colleagues. I would like to welcome Action Ontario, which is here for their inaugural Queen's Park day to increase awareness about chronic pain.

Action is an innovative, non-profit organization made up of doctors, researchers, health care professionals and patients committed to seeing improvements in the diagnosis and treatment of Ontarians who suffer from neuropathic pain and other forms of chronic pain.

Neuropathic pain destroys careers, relationships and even the will to live. Its direct impact on health care costs is estimated to now exceed \$250 million annually, with a broader impact on lost income and productivity estimated at several billion dollars per year.

On November 9, during National Pain Awareness Week, Action will be holding their national symposium at the MaRS Centre with a theme of patient input for system change, and I encourage all members to attend.

I would like to especially thank Dr. Angela Mailis-Gagnon, a constituent of mine and the chairperson of Action Ontario, for her hard work and dedication to this organization. On behalf of the government, I want to extend a sincere thank you to all volunteers at Action Ontario for the work they are doing on behalf of Ontarians suffering from pain.

#### CANADIAN MUSEUM OF NATURE

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** The Canadian Museum of Nature, a landmark in my riding, has been celebrating the centennial year of its historic Victoria Memorial Museum building. The institution itself is approaching its 155th anniversary in 2011, but "The Castle," as it's known, has been a truly special part of my community and a special place for our nation these last 100 years.

For the last six years, this remarkable building has been undergoing extensive renovations and just this spring has reopened fully for the public to enjoy.

I say that this building is an important part of our heritage because many people may not be familiar with one of the building's earliest tenants, and that was Canada's Parliament. On a bitter cold February 3, 1916, a massive fire destroyed the Centre Block of Parliament. By the afternoon of February 4, the members of Parliament were back at work in the atrium of the museum and would work there, along with the Senate, for four years.

It's important to note some key points of our history that took place there. The First World War acts instituting conscription, as well as a certain temporary measure called the Income Tax Act, were passed there. The act granting voting rights for women, a key point in our history, was debated and passed there in 1918. In 1919, one of our greatest Prime Ministers, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, laid there in state.

Congratulations to the museum's leadership: Maureen Dougan, interim president and CEO; Michel Houle, interim VP and COO; and Irene Byrne, the board secretary,

and of course the many people who work there and make it a special place.

#### PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** The municipal elections have come and gone and I want to offer my thanks and congratulations to all of those who allowed their names to stand on the ballot, including mayor-elect Rob Ford and all the councillors here in Toronto.

In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, we're home to one of only two mass transit manufacturing plants in all of Canada, that being the Bombardier plant in the Westfort part of my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. There's been a tremendous amount of good news there in the last little while: \$3.5 billion worth of contracts, \$1.6 million of that being provincial government funding, as well as about \$9.5 billion that we've announced for infrastructure in Ontario.

Additionally, my riding has received about \$10 million in gas funding from the province, committed to mass transit improvements. I know the city of Toronto has received somewhere in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars.

My point is this: In 2009, along with the Premier, I announced a \$1.2-billion streetcar contract at the Bombardier plant in my riding, \$400-million-plus of that being provincial—no federal money in that. There has now been public speculation that this particular contract might be reviewed and potentially reconsidered.

It's my hope that, as the GTA continues to expand and prepares for the Pan Am Games, the new mayor and council in the city of Toronto will have regard for the commitments made to mass transit by our government and that they will have regard for the abilities of the management and the Canadian Auto Workers in my riding at the Bombardier plant to deliver the finest mass transit vehicles in the world and to meet their contractual obligations.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** I beg leave to present a report on bridge inspection and maintenance from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** As you know, the public accounts committee considers recommendations of the Auditor General, whose report came out in December 2009. In March 2010, the committee decided to call in front of it the Deputy Minister of Transportation to ask about the constructive criticisms that the auditor made with regard to the inspection of our bridges across the province of Ontario.

It's interesting to note that there are 14,800 bridges in the province of Ontario. Of these, approximately 12,000 fall under the responsibility of Ontario's 444 municipalities. The other 2,800 are under our provincial highway system.

We make some recommendations and ask the Deputy Minister of Transportation to respond to us with their oversight with regard to the provincial bridges, those 2,800 bridges.

However, there was a great deal of concern by the committee members with regard to the other bridges, the 12,000 bridges under municipal control. That's because some very small and poor municipalities, in terms of their financial capability, have, in some instances, a large number of bridges. These municipalities are typically in the north and in the remote areas of the eastern part of our province as well.

Some of the recommendations ask the ministry what it is doing with regard to the inspection of those bridges. While the municipalities have the responsibility for these bridges, it's of our concern that they just do not have the financial capability of properly inspecting them and properly repairing them. So we asked the ministry to work with the municipalities to create some kind of system where there would be uniformity across the province of Ontario, where municipalities could measure and inspect their bridges.

As well, we asked the ministry whether or not, when they were allocating funds for infrastructure work with municipalities, they would consider doing it on a priority basis once a good system has been set up to establish where the most dangerous problems lie.

I believe it's a very constructive report to the Ministry of Education, and I notice the Minister of Education is here—

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Transportation.

1320

**Mr. Norman W. Sterling:** Sorry—as she then was. I notice the Minister of Transportation is here with us today, and I say to the minister: I would be more than willing to sit down with her, as I've offered to other ministers, to go over the report. I believe it's got some very constructive suggestions to you.

With that, I would like to adjourn the debate.

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

*Debate adjourned.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### EXOTIC WILDLIFE IN CAPTIVITY ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR LES ANIMAUX SAUVAGES EXOTIQUES GARDÉS EN CAPTIVITÉ

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 125, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune.

**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 member for a short statement.

**Mr. Dave Levac:** I would like to take just two seconds to introduce, from the World Society for the Protection of Animals, Melissa Matlow and Michelle Cliffe. We thank them for being here.

From the explanatory note: The bill amends the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997, by adding a new part III.1 that provides rules concerning the keeping of exotic wildlife in captivity.

Some of the highlights of the part:

People are prohibited from keeping exotic wildlife in captivity unless they hold a licence to do so—see section 47.2 of the act.

Those that keep exotic wildlife in captivity must ensure that the wildlife are not released and that they do not escape. If exotic wildlife does escape or is released, those who kept them in captivity are generally responsible for recapturing them—section 47.3 of the act.

Part III.1 of the act must read as being consistent with the regulation 60/09 standards of care under the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, and any regulation made under the act concerning exotic wildlife must be consistent with that regulation—section 47.7 of the act.

A provision of a municipal bylaw prevails over part III.1 to the extent that it prohibits the keeping of exotic wildlife or is otherwise more restrictive than the provision of part III.1 or a regulation made for the purposes of that part—section 47.8 of the act.

The act is amended to permit the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations with respect to exotic animals—section 112 of the act.

The short title is the Exotic Wildlife in Captivity Act.

## PETITIONS

### HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

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

"Whereas, in March 2007, the McGuinty government announced that the eastward extension of the 407 from Brock Road to Highway 35/115 would be completed"—here's the important part—"by 2013; and

"Whereas the commitment was contained in a signed contract between the federal government and the McGuinty government dated March 2, 2007; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has recently announced that the eastward extension of the 407 will end at Simcoe Street in Oshawa; and

"Whereas ending the 407 at Simcoe Street will mean added traffic congestion on smaller rural roads in northern Oshawa which are not equipped to handle the volume of traffic entering the highway; and

"Whereas ending the 407 at Simcoe Street will have significant negative effects on commuters, business, tourism, agriculture, public transit and all the citizens of Durham region;

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

"That the government of Ontario and Premier McGuinty take all and any necessary steps to complete the 407 eastward extension to Highway 35/115 in a single stage, in accordance with the original signed agreement with the federal government."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

### HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo:** I'm reading a petition to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I clearly agree with this, will affix my signature and send it with Bridget to the table.

### HOME CARE

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht:** I've received this petition from a Mr. Diaz, and it's to the Parliament of Ontario and the

minister responsible for senior citizens. It's about minimum allowances for caregivers. It reads as follows:

"Whereas seniors who are disabled and/or ill are presently suffering at home; and

"Whereas the cost of a caregiver on a monthly basis who looks after a senior in their home is around \$1,200, including room and board; and

"Whereas the cost of taking care of someone at home is at least 10 times less than the cost of a hospital bed; and

"Whereas most seniors with disabilities and/or illness are crowding an already overburdened health care system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly request that a basic government subsidy be established (based on a doctor's evaluation) which will pay at least a minimum allowance for a caregiver.

"Seniors deserve to live at home as long and as independently as possible."

Since I agree, I'm signing my signature to it.

#### ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas agriculture plays an important role in Ontario's economy and deserves investment;

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, helping farmers, food banks and people in need; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while food banks across Ontario struggle to feed those in need;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with the petition and I applaud my seatmate, MPP Bailey. I will sign it and send it to the table with page Carina.

#### PENSION PLANS

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Pension Benefits Act (PBA) regulations for 'loss of sponsor' of defined benefit pension plans only permit windup and annuity purchase; and

"Whereas, in the present economic climate, the cost of annuities is at a 25-year high, with no relief in sight;

"Therefore the purchase of annuities exacerbates the punitive impact of windup on Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, and increases the costs passed on to the taxpayers of Ontario;

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

"To amend the PBA regulations to permit the administrator and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) to apply other options in the 'loss of sponsor' scenario which will provide more benefits to Nortel pension plan members and others in similar situations, such as the continuation of the pension plan under responsible financial management by a non-government institution."

I shall sign this petition and send it to the clerks' table with Ffion.

1330

#### HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** My petition is in support of Bill 100.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users...; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

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

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to the page to take to the table.

#### MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"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, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

I shall sign this and send it to the clerks' table with Jonathan.

ONTARIO SOCIETY  
FOR THE PREVENTION  
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

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

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

I agree with the petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it down with Nicholas.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

**Mr. Tony Ruprecht:** I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

“Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers.”

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign this petition.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas, in March of 2007, the McGuinty government announced that the eastward extension of the 407 from Brock Road to Highway 35/115 would be completed in 2013;

“Whereas this commitment was contained in a contract between the federal government and the McGuinty government dated March 2, 2007;

“Whereas the McGuinty government has recently announced that the eastward extension of the 407 will end at Simcoe Street in Oshawa;

“Whereas ending the 407 at Simcoe Street will mean added traffic congestion on smaller rural roads in north Oshawa, which are not equipped to handle the volume of traffic exiting and entering the highway;

“Whereas ending the 407 at Simcoe Street will have a significant negative effect on commuters, businesses, tourism, public transit and all citizens of Durham region;

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

“That the government of Ontario take all necessary steps to complete the 407 eastward extension to Highway 35/115 in a single stage in accordance with their agreement with the federal government.”

I’m certainly in agreement with this. I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I have a petition that 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.”

I shall sign this petition and send it to the clerks’ table.

ONTARIO SOCIETY  
FOR THE PREVENTION  
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** My petition is regarding provincial oversight of the OSPCA.

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.”

#### MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

**Mr. Jim Brownell:** I have a petition signed by a number of constituents from Dundas county in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

“Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers.”

I shall sign this petition and send it to the clerks’ table.

#### OPPOSITION DAY

##### TAXATION

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinty govern-

ment to immediately remove the HST from all hydro bills.

**The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters):** Debate?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** It’s my pleasure to bring this motion to the Legislature today and to begin the debate on it. It is a very simple motion. It barely even takes up two lines in our order paper today. The reason it’s a very simple motion is because it simply asks the government to take the HST off hydro, something that can be done very quickly, very easily to provide a whole bunch of relief to the people of this province who are simply unable to keep up with the day-to-day costs of everyday living.

The HST is something the New Democrats disagreed with from day one. We did that consistently here in the Ontario Legislature, as did our federal leader at the national level.

But when it comes to what this government has done, particularly in terms of the hydro system in this province, people are telling me, from one end of Ontario to the other, that they simply cannot pay their hydro bills anymore. This government has made decisions that are driving the cost of hydro through the roof and is not acknowledging, not paying attention, not listening to the people of this province, who are saying they simply cannot afford to pay their bills anymore.

**1340**

This government has systematically brought forward initiatives while not being concerned at all about the impact that’s going to have on people’s pocketbooks.

No matter where I go in Ontario, whether I’m in Thunder Bay, Windsor, London or Sudbury, everybody is telling me the same thing: They simply cannot afford their hydro bills. The bills are going up at a pace that cannot be met by the people of this province.

I’m talking to all kinds of different people. I’m talking to people who are senior citizens. I’m talking to people who are young families, who are families with young children. I’m talking to people who are just regular working folks who are trying to make ends meet and who have seen an enormous spike in their hydro bills.

The government likes to pretend that in fact there’s nothing they can do about this, that this is all about—what’s their favourite refrain?—keeping the lights on, modernizing our infrastructure. This is one of their favourite little phrases: “We’re modernizing the infrastructure. The opposition simply doesn’t want to admit that that has to be done.”

What the government doesn’t want to admit is that they have the ability to take 8%—the salt that is in the wounds of your hydro bills—off of the bill. The government can do that, and they need to do it today. That 8% doesn’t do a single thing. That 8% doesn’t contribute at all to the infrastructure that the government likes to talk about. So they are trying to have it both ways. They are trying to pretend, first of all, that their decisions were the right ones, the decisions that are driving those bills up, and I’ll get to that in a moment. But then they’re trying to pretend, they’re trying to pull the wool over your eyes, to

say to people that in fact this 8% is going to have some impact on that very infrastructure work, and we know it isn't. That 8% is going directly into the government coffers and then very quickly out the door to huge corporate tax giveaways.

This is not the way to run a province, by burdening everyday folks with huge increases in their hydro bills, making it impossible for them to be able to stay warm in the winter, keep their lights on and do their everyday functions, and at the same time shoving that money out the door to corporations that are not guaranteeing anything in terms of job creation and investment in this province.

Shame on the Liberal government. What wrong-headed policies. What wrong-headed road are they taking us down?

I want to talk about some policies. This government has put in place a number of initiatives that are simply wrong-headed when it comes to our hydro system, when it comes to our electricity system in the province of Ontario.

I hearken to the one that's so irritating for many folks that they talk to me about it regularly: a \$7-billion, behind-closed-doors, sole-source negotiated contract with our former energy minister and Samsung.

This is the government that refused to even allow our public generation system, the public utility that generates electricity in Ontario, to participate in the green energy initiatives of this province. Shame on them. Why would they do that? I don't know why they would do that. We think that was the wrong thing to do. Instead, they sole-sourced this \$7-billion scheme with Samsung—shame on them—while not letting the public interest come to the fore in terms of provision of energy in this province.

What else did they do? Everybody knows, because today the time-of-use pricing is starting, right? Today, people get their time-of-use pricing. So, of course, the other issue that we think was extremely wrong-headed was the implementation of the smart meter plan. We have said from day one that those not-so-smart meters—

#### *Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Minister of Transportation. Order.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:**—were the wrong thing to do. New Democrats advised the government against it, but they went ahead blindly and now they've wasted \$1.5 billion on a not-so-smart meter plan that does what? It does nothing. It was supposed to help people conserve energy. It's not doing that. It was supposed to help people reduce their electricity costs. It is not doing that. It is a dismal, dismal failure, and each one of you today is going to get to experience that dismal failure, because today the time-of-use pricing starts. Your not-so-smart meter is going to not help you conserve energy and not help you save money, starting today.

What else? This government thinks it's good to cook up deals with generators of nuclear power to generate electricity that doesn't get used. We pay for Bruce nuclear to not generate power. How smart is that? That is

something that doesn't make any sense at all. This government is paying all kinds of money—actually, we're paying all kinds of money in our hydro rates—so that Bruce Power gets the money but they don't have to generate the electricity; they don't have to generate the hydro. That doesn't make sense at all—yet another wrong-headed decision and move by this government.

There are many, many examples of this government's failure when it comes to understanding that they have an obligation to pay attention to what their policies do to the people of this province. On the hydro file, these policies have been a failure from one end to the other. From the smart meters to their sweetheart deals with their friends at Bruce nuclear and Samsung, these things are simply wrong-headed.

Then we have the Ontario Energy Board, which decides, against all advice from Ontario experts, against all advice from people who know our energy system, and instead relying on the advice of American experts, that they should be granting the utilities, who are lobbying for this, an increase in their return on equity. What does that mean? That means, basically, that the Ontario Energy Board has said to all of the people of Ontario, "You have to pay a little bit more so that can you guarantee profits for those utilities"—shameful. And what makes it most shameful is that that decision was made over the protests of, against the best advice of, experts here in Ontario.

I have a list that I'm happy to share with you of people who, after that decision was made, were very quick to get on the record to say that they agree with the NDP that this was a wrong-headed move. So it's not just the NDP that's talking about this Ontario Energy Board decision; it's groups as diverse as the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the Consumers Council of Canada and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. All of those folks have written to the minister objecting to that decision, and we've objected to it too. But do you know what the minister says? "There's nothing I can do. This was a decision of the OEB." Well, that's not quite true. The minister actually can send a directive to the OEB. The minister can actually act in the interests of the people of this province, as opposed to the interests of the utility companies that simply want to gouge more profits for their corporations.

This government has long forgotten whose interests they are supposed to be serving. On the energy file alone, this government has shown that it has completely lost touch with the people of this province. No matter where I go in Ontario, no matter who I'm talking to, everybody agrees the government has lost touch. They are arrogant and they take care of their well-connected insiders before they take care of a senior citizen or a young mum who's got to worry about putting food on the table, paying the rent and paying the hydro bill.

What we are asking for in this motion is something very, very simple. What we are asking for is something the government can do that will make a little bit of a dent in the costs that people have to fork over every month on their hydro bill, and that is to simply take the HST off the

hydro bill. On top of all of those policies that I rhymed off where this government has gone wrong and forced those hydro bills up, the salt in the wound of those increases is the HST that this government has foisted on the people of Ontario. It's a very simple solution. It means an 8% reduction. That is significant. Take that 8% off. Give people a little bit of a break.

What does that mean? That means that close to six million households would see a break on their hydro bills. The average family with two kids or more: \$135—nothing to sneeze at. That's \$500 million that the people of this province would have back in their pockets, if the government only took the HST off of hydro.

### 1350

We've been bringing that issue to the Legislature over and over again, and as we've been doing that, we've also been telling the stories of regular families. I'm going to share some of those stories again today, but not very many, because I have a number of MPPs who are here in the NDP caucus, New Democrats who want to speak to this issue, who want to also talk about some of their concerns and why they believe that it's important to take the HST off of hydro. But I am going to share a couple of these stories, because I think they're important.

This is from Joanne. She happens to live in Mississauga and happens to be a constituent of the Minister of Government Services. She writes this: "My name is Joanne Leader and my home address is" in Mississauga. "I totally agree with the NDP ... that the HST should be removed from hydro. When I received my first hydro bill with the HST on it, I was shocked at the increase. Hydro is an essential service."

Joanne, we agree with you 100%. In fact, many Ontarians are using the same kind of language: They're shocked. They're appalled. They're just amazed at the rate of increase on their hydro bill, the amount of money that they suddenly are forced to pay for hydro. In fact, only in Ontario do people say that they're literally afraid to open their hydro bills—only in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Here's another one. This person is from Nipissing and happens to be a constituent of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the government House leader.

"HST should be removed from hydro bills immediately," says Caroline Landry.

"Had the government realized that there are many people in northern Ontario who heat with hydro? What about us? We have higher-than-average hydro bills. You can't turn the heat off when you are not at home—your pipes will freeze. Those of us in rural areas also have to run pipes in for incoming water and outgoing water and sewage. Has anyone thought about that?"

"In the past year, it has not been unusual to have a \$700 to \$800 hydro bill in January—and believe me, we are not toasty warm (we do not have a secondary source of heat)—the thermostats are usually set no higher than 15. The HST added to an \$800 hydro bill is \$104—that is highway robbery. And this is going to go on monthly ... people can't afford this, especially those on set income. The incentive my family received will not cover the HST

on my hydro for the first year, let alone anything else and going ahead.

"That has to stop. Something has to be done to help out people who heat with hydro in northern communities."

I'm glad that I chose this letter particularly, because when the Liberal members get up and make their speeches, I'm sure they're going to talk about all of these hoops that they've asked people to jump through to get a little bit of relief through tax credit processes and everything else.

We don't think people should have to jump through hoops. We don't think people should have to save receipts and make applications for tax credits on their income tax at the end of the year, as opposed to getting some immediate relief. That's what we think they should do. We think they should get some immediate relief, not have to jump through any hoops, and actually just get a point-of-sale reduction, or removal, of the HST off of hydro. It is fair. It is simple. It can be done immediately. It will provide money in people's pockets right away. And it will show the people of this province that maybe the government actually gets it.

One of the reporters asked me today during the scrums, "What happens if the government actually votes with your motion today? What if they vote with your motion and they actually steal this idea from you and take the HST off hydro?" I said that I welcome them to do that. I hope they do. I would support that wholeheartedly. It's not about whether it's my idea or not. What really matters is the people of the province and that they get some relief.

I say to the Liberal members across the way: Think about it and actually join us in the call. Get your Premier, your energy minister and your finance minister to do the right thing by the people of this province and take the HST off of hydro.

I'm going to close by saying this: I want to thank the thousands of people who have participated with us on the HST campaign; first, the initial campaign, when we were trying to convince this government not to go ahead with the HST, but of course they ignored 80% of the people of Ontario and they rammed through the HST. Now we've had thousands more people participating with us in this effort to try to get the HST off of the hydro bills. You send us emails, letters; you phone our offices; you provide us with information about your particular situation, and we do our best to bring those stories into the Legislature. We wouldn't be able to do that. We wouldn't be able to tell your story if you weren't telling it to us.

I want to wrap up my remarks by thanking the good people of the province of Ontario. We get letters and emails from everywhere, and people from all parts of the province are signing our online petition at [hstofferhydro.com](http://hstofferhydro.com). If you haven't shared your story yet, that's where to go: [hstofferhydro.com](http://hstofferhydro.com). Thank you. It's unfortunate that your frustration, your anger, is falling on deaf ears on that side of the House, the government side. But know that New Democrats have been listening to you,

that we appreciate that you've taken the time to support our efforts, and that we know that the right thing to do here is to provide some relief for folks who are really having a hard time making ends meet.

The government seems to think everybody is doing fine, everybody is flying high like all their friends whom they happen to provide extra money to through consultants and lobbyists and all of those kinds of well-connected folks. They think everybody is like that. I think they've forgotten that the vast majority of Ontarians are just regular folks who want to have a decent quality of life, who want to have a decent future for themselves and their kids, who want to have a clean environment and a positive outlook for the future. The government has forgotten that; we haven't.

Thank you for sharing your stories, and we look forward to fighting to get the HST off of hydro bills.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Before we continue with the debate, I want to alert the House—the member from Nepean—Carleton brought this to my attention—that we have Yvonne Jones in the west members' gallery. She is the Liberal leader from Newfoundland. Please welcome her.

Further debate?

**Mr. Dave Levac:** I appreciate the opportunity to engage in the dialogue that we're having this afternoon on a motion from the member from Hamilton Centre: "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinity government to immediately remove the HST from all Ontario hydro bills." Very clearly, it says, "all Ontario hydro bills," and I believe she referred to it that it can happen simply and just like that.

First and foremost, I'll just address that. I've got three directions I'd like to take for a moment. The first direction is to basically say where we've come from. The second part of that is where we are today and the acknowledgment of an economic downturn that the world saw. The third is to provide some information that I believe is maybe counter to what the member from Hamilton Centre has been trying to say.

First and foremost, I don't think anyone has a monopoly on how people are living their existence within their own ridings. I think it's an unfair characterization to assume that anyone who is in this place doesn't care about their riding, doesn't care about the people in it and has not, probably in their own private life, done some kind of public work to assist those who need our help. I want to make perfectly clear that I would not be bringing or casting aspersions on any member who would be working in their community and trying to help people who need it in that area. That's the first thing I want to talk about.

Now, where did we come from? I want to suggest to you that before 2003, we saw a billion dollars that got lost because of a 4.3-cent cap on hydro that was imposed by the previous government. During the 13 years previous to that, there was no new public generation in Ontario and there were no new supply links to any jurisdiction. There was a failure to implement an effec-

tive conservation strategy. The price cap, as I said, when we talk about money, cost the Ontario taxpayers a billion dollars, with no incentive to conserve. Despite the dream team that was actually hired and was paid \$40 million for the refurbishment of Pickering unit A4, it was supposed to cost \$457 million and ended up costing \$1.25 billion and was years behind schedule. Under the previous government, we became a net importer of electricity from the United States, when we used to be an exporter. The promises that we were having 2,050 megawatts from the Pickering restart by 2001 and 1,200 megawatts from interlink with Quebec across the Ottawa River—neither one of those happened, and nothing for eight years during the government time that we had a lifeline from Manitoba after the NDP cancelled that project in 1990.

So I look at where we were: in disarray, confusion, chaos, with inconsistent pricing, no vision for the future, and no continuation of the future, of where we are now. Also, if I'm not mistaken, we bought a rainforest somewhere with the intention of it being classified as our contribution to conservation. So where we were to where we are today is a good contrast. I just wanted to make sure that that happened.

**1400**

During that time frame, OPG—Hydro One—was exempted from having any freedom-of-information requests to take a look at what we now know is an extensive use of consultants. By the end of that term, it was \$650 million on consultants. It's down to \$350 million or something like that now. I wanted to make sure we made that picture clear, the challenges that we had and had to pick up from now.

Let me make the first statement I made again and then I'll make my last statement. The first statement I made was talking about an understanding of where people are today because of the economic meltdown that we saw. Yes, there are frustrations out there. Yes, each and every one of us has been receiving emails of concern about pricing, the HST and costs to the individual. Yes, we have done some things to mitigate that, which again gets minimized by the member from Hamilton Centre as something that is not beneficial to people. Quite frankly, I disagree with that vehemently. A hundred dollars in somebody's pocket is a lot of money for any one of us who understands that.

I agree with the people who have contacted me by saying that giving us some type of relief and acknowledgment is not only the fact that they're getting that money, but it's also an indication that we understand that there are some difficulties. Since 2003, the government has continued to show in its deliberations and the policies that it has produced that it continues to understand what we want to do for Ontarians and not to them.

So what I want to talk about now is, as we recover from this, that the NDP is trying to say that this one issue is the be-all and end-all of the frustration. Quite frankly, you can take that out and plug in any other topic you want and they'll keep asking the same question: "Do you want to pay more or do you want to pay less?" We know

that the answer's going to be, "I want to pay less," but it's got to be done in such a way—I've always talked about the fair-mindedness of people in Ontario who recognize that we came from a disaster in the energy sector and we're moving towards a consistent and predictable situation with more power coming on, more conservation happening, and also, what I think is important, a shift from burning coal and the use of that and moving towards biomass, solar, wind and other opportunities that are presenting themselves not just for energy purposes but for industry, allowing us to use those jobs that are going to be coming towards us. I wanted to say that.

Conservation: Between 1993 and 1995, Ontario Hydro ended all conservation initiatives, and those were savings of 5,200 megawatts by 2000. That would have equalled that much, but they were all cancelled, and what government was it? The NDP government. The NDP voted against putting on a price cap, and then they voted against taking the cap off when we introduced its removal. During the five years of NDP rule, hydro rates went up 40%.

**Interjection:** Forty per cent?

**Mr. Dave Levac:** Forty per cent. The NDP cancelled the hydro lifeline to Manitoba. That's the one I referred to earlier. They're the ones who cancelled it. That deal actually cost us \$150 million in cancellation fees. Instead, the NDP thought, "Here's the replacement. We'll buy that rainforest in Costa Rica and that will be our soul and our conscience for that."

I really do believe that this particular motion we're talking about is wrong-headed. I honestly believe that, at the end of the day, as easy as she thinks it is, she knows there's going to be a negotiation that's going to be requested and required from the federal government.

You've got a government now that has already gone through—I've got a list of about 20 different things we've done, and I'd better put a couple of them on the record, in terms of the tax credits and the tax breaks, like the one that we just had in OED. I'll just simply announce there was a 3% reduction in the Ontario rates, so we're going to be seeing some downward pressures on the cost of energy.

Quite frankly, they voted against every measure we had to help our seniors and those who are disadvantaged. The NDP has voted against every single one of those measures. I think that's more telling that their motion today.

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

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** It's my pleasure to be here to debate on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. I want to assure my colleagues in the third party that we will be supporting this measure today. We hope that the Liberal government will pick up on this resolution after debate today, in the vote, so that Ontarians can finally receive the tax relief they so desperately need when they open up their hydro bills and almost every other bill that they're starting to see across

our province since the \$3-billion HST tax grab came into play.

It's increasingly clear each and every day that the Dalton McGuinty government has continually increased taxes and energy rates. It's now taking a toll on Ontario households right across our province, whether it is in Nepean–Carleton, whether it is in Toronto and whether it's in our northern communities. It's become so drastic that many people have begun to email us. The number one concern in our constituency offices is no longer access to family physicians. In fact, the number one issue has become whether or not people can pay their hydro bills. We saw today that the Minister of Energy not only is not responding to the third party's request, but he is also not going to rule out a hike on natural gas. The snow started to fall in Nepean–Carleton yesterday. People were forced to turn up the heat. What did we hear from the Liberal government? There was no emphatic, "No, we will not increase natural gas." Instead, do you know what we were told? To turn off our air-conditioners to save our energy rates.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** We're going to be freezing in the dark.

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod:** As my colleague Mr. O'Toole from Durham says, we will be freezing in the dark, and that is what has many, many Ontario taxpayers concerned. In fact, things are so bad now that even the New Democrats have picked up on the official opposition or the Progressive Conservative Party's call for tax relief. We all know, on this side of the House, that Ontario families need a break. It seems that the only person in Ontario who has no idea how bad it is for Ontario families and seniors out there today is the Premier of Ontario, the member from Ottawa South. He is so out of touch that he thinks you have an endless ability to pay the bills after he continually hikes them. In fact, I've said many times, on many occasions, that this Premier views every soccer mom, grandmother and small business as his own ATM. That has got to stop.

His expensive energy schemes, whether those are the windmills or the solar farms or his multi-billion-dollar Samsung deal or even these smart meters, which our leader calls tax machines, have nothing more to do with the everyday economy as they do with his own personal ambitions to bring forward energy schemes that could clearly be unworkable and who—by the end of the day, it's very clear that the people paying for this are everyday moms and dads across this province.

As I relate back to this particular motion, where the New Democrats are proposing that we remove the HST from Ontario hydro bills, we believe that's welcome, but as you'll recall, the only political party in Ontario today with a track record of reducing taxes is the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. In fact, if you look to our neighbours to the east, if you look at Nova Scotia right now, it was the NDP that increased the HST after they took office, and it is now the Nova Scotia PC leader, Jamie Baillie, who has made a commitment just as of yesterday to decrease the HST and repeal that 2% in-

crease when he takes office. I want to applaud the newly elected PC leader in Nova Scotia, Jamie Baillie.

Again, it speaks to the fact that wherever you are, coast to coast, Ontarians and Canadians need tax relief, and here in the province of Ontario, we certainly need that relief. That's why a Progressive Conservative government, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, has committed to deliver real relief for hard-working families so that they will have the confidence to start spending again in our economy. We need to get moving and create more jobs.

1410

Today I have my old friend Yvonne Jones, who is the Liberal leader in Newfoundland. I want to congratulate her for coming to our chamber today to meet with us and talk to us. If you want to see an economy that has started to improve, it is our colleagues' in Newfoundland. We have also seen it happening in Saskatchewan, where people are moving and they're working again.

We need to restore Ontario as the leader of Confederation. Sadly, we are now the have-not province. We are now the province with a \$21-billion deficit. We are the ones who are losing hundreds of thousands of jobs each and every year. We need to create an environment where our Ontario families and our Ontario seniors feel comfortable spending again, and we need them to feel comfortable working again, knowing that their hard-earned tax dollars are going to be used wisely. Of course, Madam Speaker, as you know, that hasn't happened in quite some time in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. In fact, what we have seen time and again—as it relates last week to even another Auditor General's report on spending, scandal and waste at Ontario hospitals and within our larger health care sector.

That's why the Progressive Conservative Party will bring forward not only an affordable and comprehensive plan to give tax relief to Ontario families, but we will also bring forward a stringent and tough accountability plan. That's why we want to speak to another bill that will be up for debate later today on the accountability plan that this Liberal government has brought in. They need to make it tougher, because those tax dollars that we're asking people to pay, whether it's on their hydro bills or definitely through their HST dollars—on one hand the government is taking it, and on the other hand they're just wasting and squandering it. That's not fair to everyday Ontarians, particularly those with small and growing families and even more so for Ontario seniors, who have been hardest hit by this recession.

We in the Ontario PC caucus believe that is a critical issue, and that's why we'll continue to fight for taxpayers in the province, and that's why we'll support the NDP motion. As I said, it's highly important, when the snow starts to fly in the northern economy and the northern climate that we are in, that we give people a break.

People are scared these days. They don't want to open their hydro bill. It sits on the kitchen table for weeks on end because they simply can't pay it. It's the number one issue we're hearing about in our constituency offices,

whether they're calling you on the telephone to tell you they can't afford to pay it or they're walking into the constituency office. They showed up at the fall fairs. We're seeing the folks each and every day. In fact, I was over at a school on Friday for Halloween, and one of the parents came over to me and said, "My husband is going to be dressing up as Scrooge this year, as Dalton McGuinty, when we put up our Christmas lights, because we simply can't afford our hydro bills any longer."

I see my friend the energy critic for the Progressive Conservative Party walking in. He will tell you, having spent most of Saturday with me, that the number one issue that people were talking to him and me about this weekend was energy, their high hydro rates and what we need to do to turn this province around again. That's why I'm happy he's here. He'll be contributing in debate later today.

The issue at hand is actually quite a large one, because what the NDP is proposing is to remove the HST from hydro. It speaks to two issues: It speaks to the energy issue that the Liberals want to talk about, but it also speaks to the high taxation rate in the province of Ontario that people can't afford any longer. That's why we in the Progressive Conservative caucus will continue to stand up for hard-working taxpayers; it's why we applaud our colleagues in the third party for proposing an initiative; and it's why we, in our deliberations, get prepared for our platform, due out before the next election, on how we can offer real tax relief to Ontario residents right across the province.

With that, as the revenue critic, I will cede the floor. I know I have several colleagues who would like to debate this resolution, including our energy critic, who has a few things to say about the smart meters and the other wasteful spending initiatives of this Liberal government.

At this point in time, I want to leave you with the clarity that the official opposition will support the New Democrats today.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

**Mr. Paul Miller:** Before I get into the discussion here, I'd just like to say that you've got to ask yourself a question. In the last few years in Hamilton and surrounding areas, we've had massive job loss. We've had closures of plants. We've had all kinds of negative impacts on our society in the Hamilton–Niagara region. You'd think, with common sense, that a government wouldn't bring in a new tax to finish us off, but they decided to. They brought in the HST.

One of the biggest problems for the industries in Hamilton was hydro costs. My impression would be that if you wanted to help the people of Hamilton, you would lower the hydro costs and have cogeneration and invest in things like that. So what do they do? They raise it. You might as well chase a few more businesses out of Hamilton that were still there.

They say they're creating work. They stand up, day in and day out, and say, "We're creating 600,000 jobs. We're creating 50,000 jobs in green energy." I don't know where those 600,000 jobs are, but they certainly

aren't in the Hamilton area or Niagara. I don't know where those jobs are. I think they just take it out of a hat and say, "That's the number we're going with."

The 50,000 green venture jobs: Let's talk about that. They say they're going to have windmills and things like this and build wind-power-driven windmills. Well, that's interesting. Where will they build these windmills? Not in Hamilton, where they've just laid off 500 Siemens guys, all tradespeople. They have the facilities, the infrastructure, the transportation, the shipping. Everything is there in Hamilton to build these windmills for the green economy, and we're not even in the top three. We've got everything there. They don't have to build a new factory. We've got brownfields. We've got everything they need there to build without causing further pollution somewhere else, possibly, and maintaining and trying to keep the pollution under check where it already has been for the last 50 or 60 years. That would be common sense. No, they're not looking at that. We're in the running, but I don't think, for some reason—because it's not a Liberal area—that we'll see those jobs.

I'm very concerned about that. You don't tax people who are already in trouble. You don't hammer them again where it hurts. You don't put more people on the street and say you've created 600,000 jobs and 50,000 green venture jobs.

I don't know where they are. I certainly haven't seen them, and I haven't seen anybody step forward to say how many jobs they've created in their communities. I hear the odd bit here—600 here, 200 here, 300. Any bit helps, but it certainly isn't helping my community.

It's actually unconscionable that this government has taken no steps to remove the HST off hydro bills. I'll just give you one example from a woman from Hamilton, right here: Lynda Narducci, from Hamilton:

"I am a single mom, desperately trying to hold on to the home that my children love. In the words of my 11-year-old daughter, 'I will do anything'" to help so they can stay in their house rather than go to a two-bedroom apartment.

"These charges in addition to the HST are killing me! [I'm] working three jobs, trying to keep my children optimistic and hopeful, trying to be 'peaceful,' as the stress is not good for my health.

"I don't know if anyone can help me. I'm just saying my piece and hoping" that the government will do the right thing. Well, don't hold your breath, Lynda, because it doesn't seem to be moving in that direction.

I've heard from many of my constituents and other residents and businesses in Hamilton that they cannot continue to pay for the Liberal government's ever-escalating tax-and-tax-and-tax-again agenda.

Just to help the governing group understand that we're the ones speaking on behalf of Ontarians, including their own constituents, let me read an email from Laura, who lives in Hamilton Mountain, the Minister of Revenue's riding. Laura says: "I'll be short and sweet: Remove it from electrical bills. As my representative, I demand that you stand up for me and my family." Interesting.

That the HST was ever included on hydro, one of the very basic needs in the province, is beyond my comprehension.

Let's talk about today. When home heating was mentioned and the costs there, the government would not commit to not putting the HST on it. You've got hydro now, so they kill you in the summer, and now they're going to kill you in the winter with heat costs. That's really going to attract business. That's going to make businesses stay in Hamilton. I think not.

The hated sales tax may see many families, not just those in the north—people down here now might have to revert to candles, hurricane lanterns and maybe a few more winter barbecues to save money, to ease the pressure on already overburdened hydro costs, a situation that can only make emergency services a little nervous during the upcoming winter season. "We'll fire up that barbie in the garage; it may be a fire hazard. I don't know. I hope not, because we don't want to turn on the stove. It's electric."

#### 1420

The government makes many claims about how much it's doing for Ontarians. The only thing they're doing for Ontarians is putting us behind the eight ball further and further. That's what they're doing for Ontarians. They claim they've got this bright future with all these jobs. I don't really know where it is. It certainly isn't in my community. They only have to read their own emails to know that their constituents are mad too, and I'm sure a lot of them don't even want to go home and read them. I bet they're just overwhelmed with emails.

They want this mess cleaned up. This government doesn't have the tools and ability to clean the mess up. We need a change in government. The public is very tired of puffed-up Liberal rhetoric. They want real action to fix the tax mess this governing group has imposed on every Ontarian. I want to make it clear to Ontarians that probably six months before the election or even three months before, they'll come out and hand out a few cheques in different areas. I hope the people of Ontario don't buy it. I hope they're not tricked by this, because you've got to look at the last seven years and what's happened. I don't think this time they're going to be tricked.

These government ministers take every opportunity during question period to avoid answering the questions by accusing the opposition of all sorts of bad actions—not true. Even when I was debating in high school, the best defence was an offence. So what do you do when you haven't got answers? You attack the opposition. You attack their platform because you don't have one. And the one you have, if you've got one, isn't working.

They've had seven painful years to correct each of the claims they make on what they've done with hydro. What have they done? In our humble opinion, nothing but accuse, nothing but avoid, nothing but continue their inaction on these issues that are significant to everyday Ontarians; in a word, not much, all the while imposing taxes on other costs that make living in Ontario un-

affordable for everybody. Rather than just trot out their campaign-style litany of the alleged actions of the opposition parties, it's time for this governing group to fix those actions that are so offensive to them and stop talking about what we are talking about. The best defence is an offence.

While they are at it, they can fix the HST mess, because they know that, this time next year, we'll be the ones reminding them of their real tax-and-tax-again policies that are significantly harming all Ontarians. Perhaps there is a glimmer of light. Perhaps the group across the floor will actually listen to Laura and other Ontarians. Perhaps they'll realize the folly of their HST and perhaps they'll finally take the necessary action to fix this debacle and begin removing the HST from all hydro bills. My constituents are waiting for action. They haven't seen any yet. Laura on Hamilton Mountain is waiting for action and hundreds and hundreds of thousands—millions—of other Ontarians are waiting for action, not talk.

I dread to think, if they put the same thing, the HST, on all the other bills that are going to come up this winter, what state this province is going to be in—rough shape.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Mississauga South.

**Mr. Charles Sousa:** Let me start by saying that I'd like nothing more than to reduce taxes further, right throughout the system. Today we're talking about removing it, by the opposition's point, through hydro. Tomorrow it'll be gas; tomorrow it'll be something else. We'd like nothing more than to be able to reduce taxes right across the board.

But at the same time, the opposition members are demanding and asking for more support for a number of initiatives. Then it begs the question: How are we going to support that with loss of revenue? That's the trick. That's what we are trying to do as government, to try to balance the initiatives that we have to enable us to stimulate economic growth while protecting the environment and ensuring that we create jobs and we support future generations going forward.

Ontarians recognize that there is a pressing need to support a stable electricity grid. For decades, government after government has ignored this responsibility. No new generation was added, transmission infrastructure was left to crumble, and the use of dirty coal was increased. That's why we must invest in our electricity system. We must continue to invest now. We should have invested before.

Initiatives already under way include taking Ontario off of dirty coal and upgrading 5,000 kilometres of transmission lines. Since 2003, 8,000 megawatts of new energy supply have been brought online. These initiatives have costs, and that's why the government has also taken steps to help ratepayers, especially seniors, to manage those costs, such as cutting personal income taxes on the lowest income bracket and introducing a new sales tax credit. We're also moving to time-of-use pricing that

allows residents to benefit from lower costs during off-peak hours.

The Minister of Finance also introduced legislation that would offer even more assistance. The Ontario energy and property tax credit would allow almost one million seniors to receive up to \$1,025 per year, permanently. In addition, for seniors who own their home, this August you may be eligible for a property tax grant worth up to \$500 a year, for a total of up to \$1,525 going back into your pockets every year.

We agree on this side of the House, on the government side, and I will continue to seek means to support and minimize the impact of rising energy costs.

This is about a pendulum swing—and I'm going to explain myself in a moment. This is about tax reform. Again, it's about stimulating economic activity while protecting our environment.

As we recover from the global recession, we recognize that some Ontarians are struggling. The McGuinty government understands that Ontario families have been through tough times.

The NDP, in my opinion, are trying to exploit the issue of hydro prices and claim that they stand up for the average taxpayer. They say they have opposed our tax cuts that were specifically targeted to low- and middle-income Ontario families and seniors.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit that I spoke of will help 740,000 Ontario seniors and 2.8 million middle- and lower-income Ontarians to receive relief. Under the Ontario energy and property tax credit, Ontarians who own or rent a home could receive up to \$900 in tax relief, with seniors able to claim up to, as I said, \$1,025.

The opposition called on us to implement a northern Ontario industrial hydro rate to help create and retain jobs in the region and then voted against it when we brought it forward. I feel it was inappropriate that the NDP opposed our tax cuts that were specifically targeted to help low- and middle-income families and seniors. We want to help those who need it most.

We recognize that these same Ontario families are also dealing with rising energy costs. We care about how we can support those who are the most vulnerable and the most exposed, and we will continue to work with them. We have already, as I said, made over a billion dollars in relief available through the use of some of our tools on electricity use.

It's also important to recognize the value of the investments we've made in the energy system over the past number of years. We can't turn back to the days of tight supply and smog. Our continuing investments, through our electricity bills, are needed to meet those needs and clean our air. Ontario, in my opinion, has more to do with regard to energy, certainly. But we are becoming an energy leader again, and we can't turn the clock back now.

When it comes to energy, I believe the NDP have been reckless. In power, they cancelled conservation programs and raised hydro rates by 40%. When the Conservatives brought in a taxpayer-funded \$1-billion price freeze, they

voted against that. Then, when the McGuinty government cancelled the price freeze, they voted against that, too. Now the leader of the third party muses about getting rid of nuclear power without presenting any alternative to make up the difference, despite the fact that nuclear makes up half of our power generation. Our base supply of energy is nuclear, and it's emissions-free. We have to take a balanced approach with other sources of energy supply. It's reckless, I believe, to simply say that we're going to do away with nuclear and that we're not going to invest in upgrading our infrastructure and supporting and facilitating the integrity of our grid system.

As mentioned, the government has brought online more than 8,000 new megawatts of power into the system, and we've upgraded 5,000 kilometres of transmission. We have made some steady progress. More importantly, we're shutting down dirty coal by the end of 2014. Just last month, we closed four more coal units. These investments will strengthen the health of our economy, the health of our environment and the health of all Ontarians.

**1430**

We've introduced measures to help those most vulnerable, including our seniors and low-income earners.

Let's talk a little bit about conservation for a moment. The best way to reduce energy bills, I believe, is through conservation. Frankly, we've heard that from all parties, and yet the opposition like to complain about the smart meter program. Smart meters are more than just billing. Installing a smart meter allows consumers to sign up for innovative new programs like Peaksaver that provide further incentives for homeowners to conserve and save money.

It seems to me that the NDP are taking their lead from the Hudak Conservatives when it comes to campaigning against conservation led by Ontario's new smart meters. But the Environmental Commissioner couldn't disagree more with the two opposition leaders, and this is what he had to say: "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." He further says, "Going back to the same-old-same-old that did not work is not the answer," and that "environmental issues tend to get obscured by the shadows and fog of misinformation and short-sighted thinking."

So let's talk about this pendulum. On the one hand, we've got a proposal by one opposition party who are suggesting, "Cut your taxes and cut services and put our energy at risk." On the other side, you've got another opposition that says, "Increase taxes; do not cut taxes." In fact, the NDP has suggested we increase PST, and then find themselves at a point of increasing spending. So on the one hand we have a slash-and-burn policy, whereas on the other hand we have a tax-and-spend policy. What's necessary here is to take a balanced approach.

To offset those HST costs, to manage electricity costs, we provided some of those tax credits, and we need to find ways to protect Ontarians. But through the implementation of the HST, which was supported, I may say,

and encouraged by our Conservative federal cousins and husbands, we find ourselves trying to find ways to foster stimulus in the economic system by enabling those flow-throughs of tax so as not to impose tax upon tax. That stimulus encourages more investment; that investment encourages the creation of good jobs. What people want and what Ontarians want is the opportunity to work. We need to help those most vulnerable. We need to provide those support systems. What they really want is the ability to work, and that is why some of our tax reforms have been implemented. That is also why a lot of offsets have occurred: so that 93% of Ontarians will get more tax cuts.

The thing before us now, through this motion—and I would hazard to say that even as we talk about some of the tax reforms that have been put in place, I would just like to quote one more. That would be Ken Neumann, national director of the United Steelworkers, who says:

"More new jobs in Ontario are just what working families need; and helping build a cleaner tomorrow is just what workers" and Ontarians "want for their kids, too." He further says, "From steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels, workers can support their families by working in clean energy.... Workers in other countries know this is the economy of tomorrow.... More Ontario workers know clean energy will power our economy, too."

I'll conclude by suggesting that the NDP has a record of opposing any initiatives they brought forward to help create jobs to help Ontario families pay bills—on everything, as such. They opposed investing in an aging energy system. They opposed measures for job creation and economic recovery. They opposed clean, reliable, emissions-free nuclear power that generates half of our energy supply. They opposed the modernization of our energy system. They opposed support for northern Ontario. They opposed the agreement with Samsung that would—I would presume they would prefer to see the \$7-billion investment and 16,000 jobs go to a competing jurisdiction.

They are for conservation one day, and they're against it the next. It's clear the NDP are a threat to the reliability of our energy system and, I believe, a threat to our economy.

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

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I'm pleased to join in the debate on this motion that calls for the McGuinty government to remove the HST off of hydro bills.

I'm proud to have the chance to speak on this important issue because I know that my constituents in Leeds and Grenville are watching with keen interest. I know they're watching because the crippling cost of electricity is the number one concern from residents across my riding.

They write to me, they email me, they stop me when I'm at events, and they call my office. Every single time they do, the message is the same: They are desperate for relief. Often we talk about the anger that can be directed in some voters. Some may say that the municipal election

last week in some races tapped into anger, and some councils changed because of it.

But when it comes to hydro bills, what I hear from desperate constituents that I represent isn't so much anger, although they're definitely not happy; it's fear. Whether it's a senior on a fixed income in Kemptville or Gananoque or Portland, a family in Cardinal or Lyndhurst or Westport or a small business in Merrickville or Prescott or Brockville, people are scared. As a result of the double whammy that we have of soaring rates and the HST—which, I should point out, applies not just to the electricity portion of the bill but also, as many constituents talk to me about, the debt retirement charge—people are falling behind. People are scared.

Inevitably, when they do fall behind, Hydro One is going to have a surprise for them. In addition to smart meters, in addition to HST, what we're finding is that Hydro One then is going to slap on a security deposit. Even those constituents who are having a difficult opportunity to pay back, to stay ahead, again, they're going to call our offices like they've done, and then they're going to be forced to hand over even more money out of their disposable income to deal with hydro costs.

People are concerned about being able to keep the lights on, heat the family home and still make ends meet. For the large majority of these hard-working people it's the first time—for many of them, in their lives—that they've contacted an MPP to ask for some help.

It's little wonder that they're so scared. These people have reached the breaking point, and they're looking for myself and members of this Legislative Assembly to provide them some real relief. They don't want to hear any more talk. They want lower hydro bills and the chance to catch up.

That's why I'm so eager to speak to the leader of the third party's motion today. It offers us a chance here today at Queen's Park to give an immediate 8% break to Ontarians who need it.

I'm going to take the opportunity, as I know so many of my colleagues have, to read into the record some of the comments that I've received from some of my constituents. I know I've written the Minister of Energy regarding this fellow, Brian Reed from Mallorytown, who was extremely frustrated when he contacted my office regarding the rising cost of his electrical service. He's a long-haul truck driver. He's only home a couple of days a week. His wife is back home. They are modest energy users. They've got one fridge, do their laundry once a week, watch a couple of hours of TV—nothing extravagant. Yet they've seen their hydro bill jump to an average of \$300 per month.

**1440**

He writes, "During tough economic times such as we are in, these increases are simply moronic. What were they thinking? These increases, coupled with a slowdown in shipping"—because he gets paid by the mile—the introduction of the HST and other things like the eco tax caused him to fall behind. Hydro One whacked him with a \$600 security deposit.

He closes his letter: "For all it is worth, please pass my concerns on to those responsible. Ask them to think of me each night when they go home to their families, for decisions that allow increased cost in utilities, housing and taxation force me to spend even more hours on the road," away from his family, just trying to survive.

Yesterday, I received an email from small business owner Steven McArthur, who is a director at Bingoland in Brockville, writing me and urging me to vote in favour of this motion, which I am, that would remove HST from the hydro bills. He's operated that business for about the last seven years. Certainly, when he and his staff talk to their patrons, obviously, with the increase in cost of living as a result of the HST, they particularly mention HST on their hydro bills. They represent 40 charities across Leeds-Grenville who are struggling to support thousands of residents that they provide assistance to from their revenues.

In closing, Mr. MacArthur says: "Please help remove the HST from our residents' hydro bills and vote to remove it when you are called upon. Your community needs your support." I'm pleased to support them.

I was pleased to hear from Vickie Long. We actually went to high school together. She now lives in South Elmsley. She's seen her bill jump from \$197 to \$346 a month, and she's not even on her smart meter yet. So there's the concern, and we're not even into winter. She talks about her worry for others, her worry for young families. How are they going to be able to survive this winter? In fact, she lets me know that in BC, her sister's hydro bill is less than \$50 for two months, and hers is \$346 here in Ontario. Vickie's asking that I, as her MPP, bring her concerns forward.

People are so mad, they're writing everybody. This is a letter, actually, from my MP. She wrote the MP. He's a good friend of mine so he passed it along to me. I appreciate Mr. Brown passing it along to me. He's a good guy. It's from Tricia Macdonnell from the Gananoque area; it leads into the Thousand Islands:

"I am writing to you today in regard to the increase in my hydro bill since the 'smart meter' program" came forward. "Hydro is a basic need in every household, and I am completely powerless with the increase in rates. My bill has increased ... \$100 a month."

She called Hydro. Guess what happened? No resolution to her concerns; none at all.

She closes her letter: "I have always felt that the smart meter program is nothing more than a scheme under the notion of conserving energy and does nothing more than raise our rates, and my phone call to Hydro confirmed this."

With the implementation of the HST and the increase in hydro due to the smart meter program, where would our government presume working families like Tricia's are going to come up with the extra income they pay?

Just over the last couple of days, I've received three emails. They're all actually from the Kemptville area, and they're very interesting.

This first one is from Jane and Arndt Vogel: "My husband and I moved from Longueil, Quebec, near Mon-

treal, where we both lived all our lives, to Kemptville ... four years ago.” They took early retirements, built their dream home on a beautiful lot. They’re planning to spend the next 30 or more years in Ontario.

However, “Unfortunately, the cost of living here has become exorbitant, in particular due to the cost of hydroelectricity.” In Quebec, their house, double the size of their current home, amounted to less than half of what they pay in Ontario.

The important thing in this scenario is that in Quebec, their house completely ran on electricity—lights, water, air conditioning, heating—whereas here in Ontario, they heat with gas. They don’t heat with electricity. They’re asking: Please dispense with “the HST on anything essential to life, such as electricity, gasoline, propane/gas, telephone and food, so that people living in this province can actually continue to do so.”

Same with the Wylies, Rick and Carol, from the Kemptville area. They moved there three years ago. It’s one of the fastest-growing municipalities in eastern Ontario, located in my riding. It was, again, their retirement home—but there again, finding “the feasibility of staying here due to the rising cost of our hydro.” Friends of theirs with the same-sized house living in another province—I believe it was Quebec—pay only 40 bucks a month: \$40 a month for their electricity. Again, they’re asking the same question, the debate we’re having today: “Please look at removing the HST off anything that is essential to life, such as hydro, heating, gas etc. These are things for most people that we have no choice in purchasing.” It’s not a luxury.

**Hon. Deborah Matthews:** Did you talk to Jim Flaherty about this one?

**Mr. Steve Clark:** I don’t need to talk to Jim Flaherty, Minister; I’m talking to you, and I know you’re going to listen to me.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Order.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Finally, I’m going to read an email from Kim Lynch. Again, it happened to be on Saturday.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Minister of Education. Order.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Kim writes a letter: “I realize I am just one constituent in your riding, but I am sure that I could possibly be a voice to thousands” of financially cash-strapped owners “that cannot avoid paying their monthly, out-of-control hydro bill.”

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Steve Clark:** Now listen up, everybody. Her husband works full-time. She only works part-time at a local child care centre. But this HST on their hydro bill has been an added financial pressure. “We are very careful with our hydro usage.” They replaced their old appliances. They unplug things when they don’t need to use them. They try to use their dishwasher and their washer and dryer in off-peak hours. They’re doing exactly what you are asking them to do.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** And they’re still getting whacked.

**Mr. Steve Clark:** They are. They are still getting whacked. They heat with oil, but they are paying as much in hydro as they are in oil for their modest 1,200-square-foot home.

The people of Leeds–Grenville have made it very clear to me—and I have lots and lots of other cards. These were actually sent out before the HST even came forward. It was a very non-partisan mailer that I sent out as my first mailer. You read them all—HST. People are very frustrated: seniors, students, small business people. You’ve got them all there; they’re all covered.

I’m proud today that I’m going to join with my colleagues here, because I know that the relief of that 8% will be a wonderful relief. It finally will give people a break. I know my colleague beside me, the member for Sarnia–Lambton, mentioned today the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, because she thought that it was only the rich who benefit from the HST relief. I can assure her that the people who will benefit from taking this tax grab off such a basic item as electricity aren’t rich. They are working families. They’re seniors on a fixed income who every day are watching whatever small amount of disposable income they have vanish. Tim Hudak and the PC caucus understand the need for tax relief to give hard-working Ontario families a break.

I’m delighted that this motion joins PCs and New Democrats to start moving forward, but the big question that I believe the people of Leeds–Grenville are waiting for is whether this government gets it. Will the Liberal members of this House do the right thing and join with the PC Party and the NDP in supporting this motion? Ontarians are watching.

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

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I am not going to vote for this unfair proposal that would transfer wealth from the pockets of low- and moderate-income Ontarians into the hands of the wealthy and to owners of large monster homes. But we expect nothing less from a rhetorical wedge issue from a party that is opposed to generating electricity by splitting the atom, opposed to generating electricity by burning fossil fuel, opposed to generating electricity by harnessing the wind, opposed to generating electricity by building hydro dams, and opposed to generating electricity by converting solar light into photovoltaic power. No matter how you propose to generate electricity, the NDP is against you. The NDP is against the generation of electricity.

In government, the NDP not only cancelled all Ontario conservation measures; the NDP also cancelled every project intended to transmit electricity into Ontario. That hydro lifeline from Manitoba would have been completed years ago and could now be powering some 600,000 homes in Ontario with clean, affordable electricity. The NDP is against the transmission of electricity.

**1450**

In addition to their own intransigent opposition to all conservation measures proposed by the province, the NDP had, as just mentioned, its own cancellation of all

conservation measures during their one unfortunate, unproductive stint in government. The NDP is against the conservation of electricity.

Now the NDP continues its shameful war on everyone who uses electricity by being against every means of paying for electricity. The NDP have voted against the Conservatives for putting a price cap on electricity. After that price cap added a billion dollars to the debt borne by all Ontario consumers of electricity, the NDP voted against taking the price cap off.

Now the NDP does not want the users of electricity to pay for what they consume, let alone the cost of rebuilding, replacing and expanding Ontario's electricity generation and transmission system. The NDP is against people paying for electricity.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** So now we know where we stand. The NDP does not believe in any facet of generating, transmitting, using, metering—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** If we could please listen intently to the member. You will have a chance to respond shortly. Please recognize the chair. Thank you.

Member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Thank you, Speaker.

The NDP is against any method of generating, transmitting, using, metering or paying for electricity. And now we're supposed to take this motion seriously.

What happened in Nova Scotia, where the NDP actually took power? Did the Nova Scotia HST come off of electricity?

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Did the Nova Scotia HST come off of anything else? No. In fact, the HST rate went up in Nova Scotia when the NDP took power.

In fact, what happened in Great Britain when David Cameron and the Conservatives took power? Did they cut taxes? Did they maintain services? No, they didn't. In fact, in Great Britain, the Conservatives jacked up the value-added tax to 20%. Are you thinking of the Ontario PC Party? Think seriously of a 20% GST-HST combination.

Now, let's look a little more closely at this resolution. Ontario already rebates the HST to seniors and to low- and middle-income families. Ontario has done this on the watch of a Liberal government by lowering our taxes. Our taxes are now the lowest in the Great Lakes and the Midwestern states region. Lower taxes and the homeowners' property and tax credit put the cash to pay bills where it's needed most.

The NDP proposal means that the more electricity you consume, the greater your discount. The NDP proposal means that owners of monster homes are winners and owners of modest homes are losers. The NDP proposal

means that homeowners who run a business in their homes lose their input tax credit and increase their paperwork. The NDP proposal begs the question: If any ordinary Ontarian should not be expected to pay for electricity, then who should?

As Ontario, as envisioned by the NDP, looks at steadily failing electricity generation, crumbling transmission and a structural inability to pay for services, where do they imagine Ontario will get its power? The NDP doesn't care. Ontarians are not the fools that the NDP takes them to be.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member for Timmins–James Bay.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Ontarians know that electricity here in this province is already cheaper than it is in any place that doesn't have a small market and a lot of rivers to dam. It's cheaper than in the US northeast, way cheaper than in the US south—

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Stop the clock, please. I would ask the members from the third party—this is your motion—would you like to hear what he has to say? You have a chance to respond in a few minutes. I will start to name members.

Member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** Thank you, Speaker.

Electricity in Ontario is way cheaper than the US south and southeast; cheaper than the industrial states; cheaper than the US Midwest; much cheaper than California; and much, much cheaper than Europe or Japan or Hong Kong or nearly everywhere in Asia. But none of that matters to the NDP. None of that matters to a party that opposes the generation of electricity by any means, opposes the transmission of electricity, regardless of where the corridor lies, and opposes any means to pay for the generation, transmission, distribution or consumption of electricity.

They have no plan to keep Ontario's lights on. Indeed, the only possible outcome of the NDP's reckless, irresponsible energy policies is to punch Ontario's lights out. Ontarians deserve better and they've got it right before them.

Today, Ontario is North America's acknowledged leader in the generation of electricity through environmentally responsible, low-emission means. That's the way of the future—a low-emission, up-to-date, sustainable energy system that Ontario's Liberal government has conceived and implemented, not the freeze-in-the-dark policies of the NDP. Low- and modest-income families need hope, they need the jobs, the investment, the careers and the prosperity that Ontario's investment in baseload power and clean, green energy will bring, and that's the plan that Ontario is implementing.

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** It is certainly a pleasure to participate in the debate here on the third party's opposition day motion.

Certainly on this side of the House, we're all in agreement with the fact that almost every question that's been asked—and in editorials on energy—almost all of the issues basically have stemmed around energy. I would say this: The Ontario Power Authority is just one example. They sent out this very interesting little card to every household in Ontario. Today is actually the day that the winter rate clicks in, November 1. That is the time when there's more extended darkness in Ontario, and people in their homes, whether they're seniors or people who are confined to their own homes, will need to turn the heat up. And what are they going to do? They're going to be paying more taxes.

This is clearly a structured tax grab by any measure. If you look at this whole arrangement of on-peak and off-peak—I'll give you an example. A lot of people around perhaps not just Ontario, but Canada—we often refer to jurisdictions around the world that have efficient, green or environmentally friendly energy. We often refer to Denmark, Sweden and countries like that. The average price of electricity in Denmark is 34 cents a kilowatt hour. Our average price over the years has been around five cents per kilowatt hour.

I'm reading directly from the Ontario Power Authority, an agency of Premier McGuinty. The cheapest rate they're going to have off-peak, about 4 o'clock in the morning, is 5.3 cents per kilowatt hour. That time of day is actually from about 9:30 at night until a little bit before 7 in the morning. What the Premier said the other day is that people should do their laundry and energy-consuming activities off-peak. In other words, you have to get up at 9 at night and go to bed at 7 in the morning. That's kind of the plan here.

The mid-peak range is going to be eight cents a kilowatt hour, from five cents. That's a significant increase. It's close to an 80% increase in electricity. The on-peak—now, this is important for members to listen to. This is what you're choosing to do to your constituents. It's going to go to 10 cents a kilowatt hour from five cents. It's going to double. Whatever they say on the other side—if they don't know, then they shouldn't speak on it, and if they do know, they're not being forthright with the people in Ontario. It's that simple.

Not only that, it's going to be taxed. It's going to have HST on top of it, which is further—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The former Minister of Agriculture and the now Minister of Education is saying I'm making it up. I ask her to refute what I am saying. I'm reading from their document. This is your document. It appears now from what you've said, Mrs. Dombrowsky, that you don't know—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Would the member refer to—

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The Minister of Education. It appears that she doesn't know, because she said that what I'm saying is wrong. I want that on the record because, during the election, if you're showing this lack of integrity with your constituents—quite honestly, I'm surprised.

**1500**

I want to refer people to some real information here. I don't want to use too much time. There's a very good article—

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The minister's leaving. If I offended her, I apologize.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Order.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Here's the issue. There's a very good article. It's worth reading. I encourage members on the opposite side to read it. "The Soaring Price of Electricity Is Due to the Green-Energy Activism of George Smitherman." Well, George got a good spanking there; he got a real good spanking the other day. I think that people were right. They knew then that George led them down the wrong road. This article is worth reading. It says here, "The Swedish retail giant IKEA announced yesterday it will invest \$4.6 million" on 3,790 solar panels in Toronto stores to produce 960,000 kilowatt hours per year.

Now, on the feed-in tariff—this is technical, so listen up—they're going to receive 71.3 cents for each kilowatt hour, which amounts to \$6,800 a year for each home. Sixty-eight hundred dollars is what the homes should be paying and will be paying in terms of this, and IKEA will get 71 cents per kilowatt hour.

It goes on to say, "Since the average Toronto home currently pays about \$1,200 for the same quantity of electricity, that implies that IKEA is being overpaid by \$5,400 per home equivalent." That's going to be spread over the rate, so all the other rates are going up so that you don't notice. Imagine: 71 cents per kilowatt hour, and that power is going to be dispatched whenever it's available. They'll shut down nuclear plants just to dispatch the renewable stuff.

I think that the people around Ontario should be outraged. This article is not written by anything more than an expert.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Yes, I'll try to. Steve went a little longer than his 10.

I would say that this is it. If you read this article and pay attention, the consumers of Ontario are going to pay more and be blamed for using any electricity because they're going to say, "You have a smart meter that tells you when you should have switched your usage to an off-peak rate." This is not fair to the people of Ontario, and our leader, Tim Hudak, will change the rules. I am certain of that.

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

**Mr. Michael Prue:** It's a privilege and a pleasure to rise on this debate. Every single day, when I'm opening up the newspaper, when I'm watching the news on television or on the radio, I'm hearing arguments and talk, and radio call-in shows, columnists and TV broadcasters. They're talking about time of use. They're talking about smart meters. They're talking about the HST on hydro. They're talking about the HST on debt

repayment. They're talking about the stranded debt. They're talking about the public utilities financing the Liberals. They're talking about hydro expansions and the need for it. On and on the debate goes; and of course it goes on and on here.

I just had the privilege of listening to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, who delivered—I want to commend him—one of the most humorous lectures he's ever given in this House in terms of where he sees us going and what is happening. But ordinary people out there are sending us letters and emails, phone calls and faxes about how hydro is affecting them.

I am waiting for the members opposite to stand up and tell me how many letters and phone calls, emails and faxes you are getting from people who say, "Keep doing this. This is wonderful, what's happening to my hydro. This is the best thing you've ever done. My lights aren't going to go out." All the rest that stand here and pontificate on every single day: I would hazard that you haven't received one amongst all of you, because the reality is that people are upset at your policies.

People know that time of use is not working. People know that the smart meters are forcing them to get up in the middle of the night if they want to save money and that time of use from 7 till 10 in the morning, effective as of today, is when you're getting the kids ready to go to school, when you're getting up in the morning. And at nighttime, when you come home after a hard day at the office, you can't turn on too many of your electrical appliances.

Those same people know that the stranded debt is the last thing this government should be putting the HST on. They know, as of today, that the Liberals are being financed by the public utilities that give them tens of thousands of dollars in payments—their money that they pay for the utility going back to the Liberal Party for your electoral fortunes. They know that this whole argument that the Liberals have been making for years, "The NDP wants the lights to go out"—the lights will never go out. The lights will never go out with the electricity that we have available here, not in this generation at least. And they will not go out because we are using less and less electricity.

A good article in yesterday's paper—

**Interjection:** Nobody's working.

**Mr. Michael Prue:** Yes, nobody's working; that's a start.

But a good article in yesterday's paper showed what the hydro forecasters said about the hydro that was going to be required in Ontario that the Liberals bought right into. Then it showed Dr. Keith Stewart, who said, "No, don't listen to them. Hydro use is actually going to decline by 10%." A couple of years later, who was right? Was it all those high-priced hired hydro consultants that the Liberals listened to? Or Dr. Keith Stewart? Well, I'll tell you: It was him.

These same people are telling you again, "Well, this is just a momentary blip. Listen to us. We need to build more and more nuclear reactors. We need to spend all of

this money." Dr. Stewart is to be believed again, because he said that we've only just started with the conservation and that, in fact, in the future we're going to need less electricity, not more. He's absolutely right. That's what has to be said in this debate, and ordinary people across Ontario understand it.

In fact, I want to read a couple of these wonderful emails that we keep getting. I know the government members get them too, because they're copied to them the same as me. Here's one from Unionville. He writes, in part, "Money-grabbing for the electricity time-of-use rates." Just part of his email: "This is totally insane and ridiculous. This change has nothing to do with energy or cost saving; this is purely money-grabbing for a few beneficiaries, those who won the tender of huge contracts to sell the smart meters, and those who installed them. But the major beneficiaries are the electricity distributors and hydro companies (aren't the executives of the hydro companies appointed by the government? Or not?). We all are still paying every month the debt owed by the formerly corrupted or poorly run hydro company decades ago.

"I hope if anyone from the MPP offices or the news media has something to say, please do something and let this government know that we are very, very, very angry. Maybe it's time to move out of this province or change." One guy writes that.

Here's one from East York. The gentleman writes, "I'm writing to ask that you'll vote to remove the HST from our hydro bill.

"In general, I don't have a huge problem with the HST, but taxing something as necessary as electricity seems outrageous. It's clearly an additional burden to Ontario's poor."

Here's another good one: "The HST on hydro is the most unfair tax that I have ever experienced. Our household has always tried to not waste electricity as much as possible but we have to have lighting at night and to keep our food safe to eat and to keep warm in our cold Canadian climate, so no matter how much a person tries to conserve, hydro is essential. This enormous tax grab is just so unbelievable....

"The McGuinty government is a shame to Ontario and they obviously are completely out of touch with reality.

"Ontario is in big trouble and it seems that our complaints are falling on deaf ears.

"We need help soon!"

And the last one: This one is one of my favourites. I stood up and asked a question in the House to the Minister of Energy for this woman some time ago. I got kind of a really bad answer, and she has written back. She writes: "'Note the non-answer' doesn't surprise me! It will go with the 'non-answer' I got in a written letter from the office of Energy Minister Duguid in July 2010. It's becoming very apparent that no one in the entire government wants to provide an honest answer to the question of, 'Is it legal to charge tax on the debt retirement charge?' And the simple fact is that most would say it isn't legal. But they continue to charge us and we continue to pay it.

“The statement given to Mr. Prue by Mr. Duguid the other day is no more than a joke. First, he never answered what was asked of him. Second, what good is a tax credit given in March or April when a senior will be counting their change in the cold winter months to try and find enough funds to pay that month’s bill?” Good question.

I ask the members opposite: If you are so sure of what you say, if you think the public is so sure that you are right, why don’t you quote a couple of letters that you’re getting in support of what you’re doing? I hazard a guess it’s because not one of you has ever received a letter in support of your government’s program on these issues; not one of you. If you have, stand up and I will say I’m sorry, because somebody would have written to you. But I would hazard that no one has written you that kind of letter. They are writing you the same kinds of letters they’re writing to me, and all I have to say on their behalf—I agree with them: Your hydro policy is a disgrace, and they are hurting for it.

1510

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

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very, very important issue, an issue that we’ve been talking about and debating not only in this Legislature but outside among the people as well.

We also know that in order for us to comprehend a very complex issue like this particular one, the full story has to be told, the full story has to be shared. We have to know where we are here today and where we came from. One of the things which has been missing in this whole debate is the full story. I want to take some time to talk about that part of the story because it’s extremely important. When I am speaking with my constituents and able to provide the full context, you can see a far better understanding of where things are and where we are going.

Part of the story, of course, is how the system has been developed. Energy is something we don’t just create like this; there is a lot of investment that goes into energy, and there has been a lot of experimentation with our energy system to ensure that we have the capacity, that it is affordable and available to both our homes and our businesses, because it’s also critical for the economy of the province.

We know what the previous government tried to do, and I think that is a very important part of the story. At one point, the previous government wanted to privatize energy. I think a lot of us recall the kind of debate that took place in this province as result of that policy.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** You guys put privatization on steroids.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Madam Speaker, I never heckle members. I would appreciate that the same respect is given to me. Thank you very much. I’m sure the member will have an opportunity to respond.

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I’m sorry.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Apology accepted.

There was an effort to privatize the system, and there was a lot of hue and cry.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Who’s building generation now?

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** Wow. That was all of two seconds of politeness that was granted to me.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

**Mr. Yasir Naqvi:** There was an effort to privatize the system. There was a lot of debate, and the government retracted. Then they decided, “Okay, we will deregulate the system,” and a very complex mechanism was put in place. This was all being done by the previous Conservative government. There was still a lot of angst in the province; there was still a lot of uneasiness as to what would happen to our system as a result.

So what did the government do? Because it was nearing an election, they put on a rate freeze in order to calm people. The result of their rate freeze was a \$1-billion deficit to the system. I often get asked, “What is this debt retirement charge?” I think all of you get asked the same question. That’s what the debt retirement charge is. We’re trying to pay off that \$1-billion deficit that was put on the system because of an ill-conceived, ill-thought-out rate freeze.

So this current government is trying to bring some semblance of order to a very complex system, and one of the very first points in that is to ensure that we invest in our system, to ensure that we have sound generation and distribution, not to mention cleaning up the system. By “cleaning up,” I mean to ensure that we are not relying on dirty sources of energy. I can tell you one thing: In my riding of Ottawa Centre, there is a lot of support not only for conservation but also green sources of energy, for renewable energy sources. Constituent after constituent speaks to me about the need for investment in energy being created through wind and through solar. This is what the McGuinty government has been focusing on: to ensure that we have a system in place that not only meets the needs and supplies the demands of the province, but also results in a cleaner environment.

Of course we know that that’s not cheap. If it was cheap, everybody would have been doing it. Of course it has a cost component to it, but it is important for the future well-being of our province, for our children and for our families. I’m very proud that we are making investments in renewable resources of energy and that we are using wind and solar and other sources of renewable energy as a way to create energy in this province.

Other issues around cost: Besides making a tremendous amount of investments—and I think they’re in the range of \$8 billion or so in the last seven years—we have made sure that, as part of the tax reform package, we also brought very significant personal income tax cuts for low-income families, which the opposition parties, including the NDP, voted against.

We also are introducing a very significant Ontario energy and property tax credit, which is aimed directly at seniors and families on a low income. That is a very

important investment, and I want to see how the opposition and the third party are going to be voting on that important initiative.

There are mechanisms being put in place to ensure that we provide targeted help for the most vulnerable in our community, at the same time ensuring that we're building sound, safe, reliable and clean sources of energy right here in the province of Ontario.

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

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the opposition day motion. I'm not going to go through a lot of the debate items that have been covered already. I'd just like to read a number of letters from my constituents that I received just recently, as I knew this debate was coming up today.

I also would like to say that I didn't need to do any high-priced polling. I spent four days at the International Plowing Match talking to people all over southwestern Ontario and also four days at the Brigden Fair. I know exactly that people from all income strata—middle-income, low-income, more affluent, young, old and in between—are all against this HST on energy, and they made that loud and clear.

I'm sure that the government members and the backbenchers must be hearing the same thing. I, like the member from Beaches–East York, would like to see them bring in those letters that they received in support of this, if they actually received any.

Anyway, here's a letter to me:

“Good day, Mr. Bailey,

“I am writing in regard to today's debate on HST.... We're in times when the Liberal government is asking everyone to tighten their belts. It's hard tightening our belts when the Liberals are using the same belts around our necks to choke us. As a former Liberal party member myself, my opinion is, the HST is a burden much too huge for the Ontario people. I ask that you convey my concerns during debate today.”

From Kieth and Janet Gark: “I would appreciate and expect that you will vote to drop the HST on electricity cost during Monday's debate. I know a lot of people who are really struggling now. This is the wrong time to charge this....” That's from Mr. Kieth Gark, from Ryan Street.

From Gary Nicholls: “I understand that a debate will take place this coming Monday at Queen's Park as to whether or not we should pay the harmonized sales tax on our hydro bills. I am counting on you to support your constituency and vote against applying the HST to our already-too-high hydro bills.”

Here's one from a Jodi Huerter: “Monday, starting at about 1:30, you and other politicians at Queen's Park will debate whether the HST should be eliminated from hydro bills. I urge and expect you to fight for the removal of the HST from hydro bills.” That was Ms. Huerter.

“Bob,

“By way of introduction”—this is Mr. Keith Murray from Camlachie. “I am strongly opposed to the HST

being applied to hydro bills.... The HST is only making a bad situation worse.... We ship garbage to Michigan to be land-filled and use valuable farm land” to operate disposal sites. Please speak up and rescind the HST on energy.

“Hello Mr. Bailey,

“I feel very strongly that utilities” should be “exempt from PST....

“My water bill is outrageous, and I honestly don't know how the city of Sarnia” brought in such a huge increase.

“The HST has caused undue stress on our family”—this is from Jessie and Ron Hillier. Please vote to remove the HST.

“I'm writing to advise you of our disgust with the HST being applied to hydro bills.” That's from Bob and Lavinia Dickenson.

I'm going to close with one quote that someone said one time, and I think it's pretty appropriate today. It's not that this Liberal government knows so little; the problem is, they know so much that isn't true.

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

1520

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** I thought maybe there would still be some folks on the government side who wanted to talk on this bill, but they're probably a little bit gun-shy. They're probably as interested in talking as the public is interested in sending those thank-you cards out to them for imposing the HST on hydro.

I just want to talk a little bit historically about this HST and this GST and all of these STs. The Liberal members like to talk about how they're going in their ridings and they're saying the HST was forced upon them by the federal government. Well, the reality is that every federal government of all parties has always sought a harmonization of the collection of sales taxes. However, they have left it up to the provinces. Back in the Chrétien government days, they approached the Ontario government of the day and said, “We want you to have a harmonized sales tax,” and Mike Harris and Ernie Eves said no because it would have applied to too many things.

Premier McGuinty saw a tremendous opportunity with the HST, a real cash cow for this Liberal government. In the negotiations of the CITCA agreement—and it is very important that people understand this—the decision as to what to apply the new tax on was absolutely at the discretion of the province imposing the HST. The McGuinty government had every option on the table, and it was totally their decision as to what to apply the HST to. There was no requirement for them to impose it on any products that were not previously subject to the provincial sales tax.

What we saw here, and what is hurting seniors, families and people all across this province to the most dire degree, is the products and the services on which Dalton McGuinty's government decided to put those taxes on, some of the things that you simply cannot get away from. If you're living in Ontario today and you own

a home or you rent, either directly or indirectly you will pay for hydro. If you have a vehicle, you will pay for gasoline. If you have a home of any kind, you will pay to heat it with gas or home heating oil if you're not heating it already with hydro. Those are three essential things that you cannot get away from spending on here in the province of Ontario. Premier McGuinty had the options in front of him as to whether or not to extend the HST to those products, and this is what galls people across this province. It was their decision—he and the finance minister and the members of the Liberal cabinet—alone to extend the HST to those products. They could have said no. They had the option of saying no. However, they were so terribly addicted to the revenue and addicted to the taxpayers' pockets that they could not resist it. It shows a bit of another side to the Premier. He is not going to have trouble paying the HST on hydro or gasoline or heating. And, dare I say, no member of this House is going to be on the soup line because of the HST on their hydro or their gasoline or their home heating. But there are an awful lot of people out there in Ontario who, because of the imposition of this HST on those essential products, are suffering badly.

I was at an event on the weekend and I was talking to a couple of seniors, and they said, "How can it be right that our pensions go up by next to nothing"—and I know, in fairness, that there have been some tax changes, and they're going to talk about singing the praises of their tax rebates for seniors and other taxpayers in this province. But they don't even come close to balancing the pain that is being inflicted on those groups as a result of the imposition of the HST.

My friend from Ottawa Centre wanted to talk about the Green Energy Act and how they had to raise the hydro because they had to pay for the changes in the electricity system. Well, George Smitherman, before he left his House, repeated it over and over and over again. He said that the Green Energy Act is going to add 1% per year to your hydro bills. We all know, now that George is gone, that that just wasn't the case. That just wasn't the case. But the pain remains, and the pain of the HST is going to be with people for an awfully long time.

As I say, if the Premier would have looked into the eyes of a couple of seniors—another couple of seniors said to me, "We just don't know if we can continue to live in our homes."

I was also speaking to a young couple in Chatham earlier this year, back in the summertime, late summer. You know what they said to me? The government and the former Minister of Revenue used to go on and on about, "It's going to create 591,000"—they round it up 600,000—"jobs." I was talking to these folks in Chatham. They have two small kids. That was in the summertime, and you'll you note that our dollar is a little higher today than it was in the summertime. You know what she said to me? She said, "We have already made up our minds that we're going to be doing an awful lot more of our shopping in the United States. We're going to be planning and making our trips to the United States and that's where we're going to be spending our dollars,

because we can't afford to live in this province under this regime any longer because of the imposition of the HST on essential services, on essential goods."

The choice could have been made. First, they started to sell this thing as revenue-neutral. That was the biggest crook of you-know-what in the history of politics. Now they're saying they're trying to balance it off. Well, it won't balance it off. The people are paying and they're paying dearly. They could have made the choice and said, "If you really want to make this revenue-neutral, we're only going to impose the HST on products that were previously taxed at the provincial level." That would have been revenue-neutral; that would have been true tax reform. They chose to go for the kill.

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

**Mr. David Zimmer:** We've heard a lot of pointed comments in this debate this afternoon, but I think we also have to keep in this debate the bigger picture in our mind.

The HST is a piece of a larger proposal of a tax reform package. Why are we bringing that tax reform package to fruition? It's because we have an absolute obligation as legislators to do what we can to shore up and make healthy again Ontario's manufacturing sector. All economists, business persons, chambers of commerce and leading unions all recognize that if we don't get Ontario's manufacturing economy back on a stronger footing, our schools are going to suffer, our health care is going to suffer, our universities are going to suffer, and our roads and bridges are going to suffer. So it's a comprehensive tax package, and it's not responsible for the third party to attack a narrow piece of it and, in that attack, not put forth all the facts on the table.

I've said it's a comprehensive tax package. One of the pieces in the comprehensive tax reform package is that 740,000 seniors are going to get an increase in the tax relief that's available to them. We haven't heard one peep from the third party about the tax relief increases that those 740,000 seniors, for instance, are going to get, along with many, many other Ontarians.

**1530**

For the record, let me just walk through, in about five or six points, the details of the tax relief that, in this case, 740,000 seniors are going to receive. First of all, again, the comprehensive tax reform package: There's something called the Ontario seniors' energy and property tax credit: \$1,025. The next piece, the seniors' property tax grant: That's \$500. Then the permanent Ontario sales tax credit, which goes to everyone in the province, including, of course, seniors: That's \$260.

Then we have an additional point here, the transition payments. That's \$1,000 for a couple or \$300 for a single. If you're a senior couple, with your spouse or your partner, you are going to receive an increased tax credit here in Ontario of \$2,785. If you're a single senior Ontarian, you're going to receive an increased tax credit of \$2,185. Those are significant amounts of money.

This government realizes that in this comprehensive tax reform package, there are certain transitions that are

going to have to be made. These transitions that I've just outlined in detail, amounting to \$2,785 for a senior couple or \$2,185 for a senior single, are designed to assist them to make the transition on that one piece of this comprehensive tax package, the HST piece, and some other pieces.

So we come back to the question: Why are we asking Ontarians to work with us on this comprehensive tax package? The reason is, all good-thinking Ontarians and all good-thinking members of this Legislature recognize their legal responsibility, their economic responsibility and I say their moral responsibility to get Ontario's economy on a solid footing.

To do that we have to restore and reinvigorate, essentially, the manufacturing industry. To do that, we've got to create a regime where those industries can compete nationally and internationally. If we don't get it right, if we don't get that piece right in the years coming in Ontario's manufacturing sector, our economy will be so weak that we won't be able to support those things that we all agree on: schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, senior citizens' care, long-term care.

In fact, the comprehensive tax reform package, of which the HST is a piece, makes such sense that I can't help but note for the record an endorsement, or a statement about it, made by one Ken Lewenza, who is the president of the Canadian Auto Workers of Canada, someone not unknown to the third party. I quote from a speech that Mr. Lewenza made in December 2009 at the Sheraton Hotel to the Canadian Auto Workers council. He said, and it specifically relates to the leader of the third party's thinking on this issue: "I said to the Ontario NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, 'Andrea, the harmonized sales tax ... cannot be an issue from the progressive side.'"

He endorsed the comprehensive tax package, including the HST, because he knows that on behalf of the union that he represents, the CAW, it makes sense for his members, because it will do more for them to ensure their jobs in the future than just about anything else this province can do. That is our comprehensive tax reform package. The HST is a piece of that.

It's a disservice to the debate for the leader of the third party just—

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

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** It is with pleasure that I rise to support this motion. For the record, the motion is quite simple. It says, "That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the McGuinty government to immediately remove the HST from all hydro bills." Nothing could be simpler. I am amazed at some of the speeches that we've heard coming from the government benches.

I just want to make a couple of very quick points. Hopefully, I can save about a minute and a half for my friend from Nickel Belt, who wants to say a word on this as well.

First of all, the government is saying, "This is a complex issue." "Complex? My bill went up. It's simple; I'm paying more for hydro than I ever have before," says the

average citizen in Ontario. So when the government stands and says, "Oh, you should be happy that your bill went up because this is a complex issue, and we found ourselves a solution," all I know, from the perspective of the bill payers in Ontario, is that this is not a complex issue; this is all about you putting your hands in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. They're feeling that they're getting gouged every time they get a hydro bill because of the HST being added to the bill, because of the smart meters and all kinds of other things that you've done.

You say, "Oh, my God, we're just fixing the hydro system. It was the NDP and it was the Conservatives who broke the system before us." All I know is that when I left office and when the Tories left office, hydro bills were a lot less. Yes, the Conservative government dabbled in privatization and other things, but under your watch hydro has gone up significantly, to the point that industry and everybody's hydro bill have been affected.

But you say that you have to fix the system. All I'm saying to you is, first of all, we don't need your fix. It's too darned expensive. We see it on our hydro bills every day. And, second, the very fact that you've got to give a tax credit to citizens in order to afford your increased hydro rates is an admission that hydro rates have gone up too high.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** I'm going to leave about two minutes, by the look of it, so you'd better get up there. I was signalling for you to go, and you weren't moving.

I just say to the government across the way: We can't afford your fix. Hydro bills have gone through the roof. We're hearing it everywhere across Ontario. As my friend Mr. Prue pointed out, if you think this is so popular, bring out all the emails and letters that you've received saying that this is a great thing, and maybe we'll listen to you. The reason you haven't is because everybody knows they've been whacked, as my friend Rosario Marchese says, when it comes to hydro bills in the province of Ontario.

I want to end on this point, because I know Madame France Gélinas will speak to this as well. I heard the member just recently say, "But we need the HST in order to fix the resource industry in Ontario. The HST will put people back to work." In my riding, they closed the largest employer in town, Xstrata refinery and copper. Why? Because the hydro rates went through the roof. It's the case across this province. If you're in a paper mill, you're a heavy industrial user of electricity, you're shutting your plant down to move to Quebec or Manitoba, where the electricity prices are much, much lower.

I will vote with Andrea Horwath on this because it's the right thing to do. I encourage the Liberals to do what's right for once in seven years and vote for something that makes some sense: to give people relief when it comes to their hydro bills.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I wanted to add a little bit of a perspective from the north. Like my colleague, I also deal

with a lot of people who work in the forestry sector. The forestry sector has been decimated. It's really, really hard to stay in business, and if they stayed in business, this HST on your hydro bill is about to kill the few of them who survive.

I want to give the example of Fryer Forest Products, which is by the French River in the south end of my riding. They're barely hanging in, and then comes the hydro bill and then comes the HST. We are about to lose 120 jobs in the French River area, where there are no other jobs. There are no part-time jobs to be had; there are no minimum wage jobs to be had; there is no Walmart, no Costco. You're talking the French River, where you either work in the forestry sector or you own a lodge and you have tourism. That's it; there are no other jobs.

Well, 120 jobs—think about it—in an area that has 3,000 people. This is huge. To risk this so that we can put HST on a hydro bill doesn't make any sense.

I looked in the north of my riding, in Mattagami and Gogama. They also rely on the forestry industry. This ever-increasing cost of hydro is putting this fragile recovery in the forestry sector in peril. We have an opportunity right here, right now this afternoon to change all this, to secure this fragile recovery so that we see forestry settle on its feet and maybe bloom again in northern Ontario, which we all hope will happen. It is easy. Take the HST off the hydro bill. It would help those little entrepreneurs, it will help the forestry industry settle on its feet and, more particularly, it will protect 120 jobs in the French River, jobs that we won't be able to replace if those are gone. The HST on hydro is about to tip the balance the wrong way.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The time allotted for debate has expired.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1541 to 1551.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain risen while the clerks name them.

#### Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Murdoch, Bill
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce
Clark, Steve	Marchese, Rosario	Sterling, Norman W.
Elliott, Christine	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tabuns, Peter
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Hampton, Howard	Munro, Julia	

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

#### Nays

Bentley, Christopher	Jeffrey, Linda	Naqvi, Yasir
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Brotten, Laurel C.	Johnson, Rick	Orazietti, David
Brown, Michael A.	Kular, Kuldip	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Smith, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Greg
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	Sousa, Charles
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza	Zimmer, David
Gravelle, Michael	Murray, Glen R.	

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 23; the nays are 41.

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

*Motion negatived.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

#### LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

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

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Thank you kindly, Speaker. You will recall that I was well into my 20 minutes on this bill when the bill was last before the House.

It is noisy in here, isn't it, Speaker?

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Stop the clock for a minute, please. I'm having a very hard time hearing the member from Welland. Will those who are staying stay and those who are leaving leave, please? Those who are staying: please, order.

Member from Welland.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker. I was loath to make those comments myself. I'm pleased that you did.

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** That's because you're not the Speaker.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** No, because I'm a rather shy, retiring person. Please, Ms. Wynne, come on. Wishful thinking.

We were well into my 20 minutes on this, and I'm not sure, but I don't think that I had made reference to the recent Ontario poll that showed that 76% of Ontarians would like to see another party in power, other than the Liberals, and 86% say it's harder now to make ends meet than it was two years ago. Those are pretty bad numbers

even on a good day. Let's assume that there's a four-point margin of error. That means that it could be that only 72% think another party should be in power; or it could mean that 80% think another party should be in power. We haven't seen these types of numbers or this type of dramatic free fall in a long, long time.

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** Since 1995.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Somebody said "1995," when Liberal Bob Rae was leading the NDP, and I say, some of us managed to save ourselves. When you're looking at numbers like 76%, you're talking about devastation. These are the kinds of numbers that got Jean Charest and—who was the other Conservative elected federally? Ms. Campbell?

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** Elsie Wayne.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** It was Elsie Wayne—reduced to two members in the caucus; two. People said it was impossible. It was shocking. But there were two people who saved themselves—dramatic, dramatic numbers. I liked Ms. Wayne. I liked Jean Charest. I liked him better when he was a Conservative than when he was a Liberal. But that's where we're at.

We've had this shocking revelation for a few weeks now here at Queen's Park. Ms. Horwath and the New Democrats have been coming to question period for two weeks now with news about all sorts of public monies being diverted from colleges and universities, being diverted from health care and being spent on high-priced, well-connected, politically tuned-in, politically connected-at-the-hip lobbyists and consultants. Then we learn today in question period that hydroelectric utilities have been greasing the Liberal Party to the tune of thousands of dollars per utility.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Mr. Zimmer responds. He can't believe it. He finds it remarkable. It boggles the mind. I can hear his mind boggling as we speak, that his party, the Liberal Party, would be taking electricity ratepayers' premiums and then diverting them to political party funding, to wit, for the Liberals. As if it weren't bad enough that we don't have electricity rates already going through the roof, to go yet higher because of not-so-smart meters, and that we have the cost of electricity already skyrocketing, heightened by the Liberal HST, this brand new tax on electricity, electricity ratepayers, electricity users who are paying the highest prices for electricity in their lifetimes, are now learning that a whole lot of that money they wanted to use to pay for the electricity bill is being provided as political donations to Mr. McGuinty's Liberal Party here in the province of Ontario. That is indeed shocking stuff. I know because I have the radio on in the background in my office. I'm listening to newscasters, I'm listening to radio talk shows, and people are outraged by what they learned today on the heels of all of the scandalous news that has occupied the airwaves over the last two or three weeks around this issue alone. It's a real problem, and that's why the committee hearings are going to be so delightful with respect to this bill. However, it could well be that the Liberal government will

use its brute force, as its current majority allows it, to curtail any meaningful committee hearings. The minister and Premier, on the one hand, say that oh, my goodness, the minister is shocked; she's overcome. She's got the vapours, if you will, from learning that there are these high-priced consultants and lobbyists being hired by schools and universities and by hospitals. Who does she think she's been talking to while she's been Minister of Health—people who wandered in off the street, people who are out for their daily constitutional, and figure, "I'll drop in and see the Minister of Health and maybe talk to her about the hospital where my kid lives," up in wherever it might be? Who does she think she's been talking to when she goes to \$300, \$400, \$500 meet-the-minister soirees that the lobbyists organize?

**1600**

For the lobby industry, political fundraising for the Liberals is going to get pretty darned difficult. These lobbyists that are peddling cabinet ministers and the occasional Premier are sort of like—"pimping" would be an interesting word to use because what they're doing is charging money to get your hand shaken by a cabinet minister or a Premier. Of course, the money is, in largest part, fundraising for the Liberal Party, but it's also a whole lot of commission off the top for the lobbyist. The lobbyist insists that if it weren't for lobbyists and it weren't for consultants, I presume—

*Interruption.*

**Hon. Monique M. Smith:** Is that Mr. O'Toole's cellphone ringing?

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Speaker, you can deal with the cellphone problem very easily. I suspect there are a few less people twitting or tweeting or twittering in the chamber this week after the revelations last week about the Minister of—

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** Research and Innovation.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** —Research and Innovation. He was innovative, all right.

**Mr. John Yakabuski:** He was having a late-night meeting.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Yes. In any event, you could ban those electronic devices, because they have no business being here in the chamber.

What's going to be interesting is that the lobbyists are going to be coming to the committee saying, "No, the public doesn't understand, and the minister doesn't understand. This government, the Liberal government, Dalton McGuinty's government, is inaccessible. That's why they need us lobbyists."

Minister Matthews says, "Why, just call me any time." She didn't offer up her cellphone number on to Hansard, but I presume it's available somewhere. It's maybe on her website. You can call her home number and her cellphone number after hours and so on.

The minister says, "No, you don't need lobbyists and consultants to contact your government. Just call us." We know that's not true. Use MPPs as lobbyists? There are some people here who are very capable of doing that; there are a few others—I won't name names—whom I

wouldn't trust with my local dog pound, never mind my local hospital.

Please. The lack of sincerity here is overwhelming, but somebody's not telling the truth, and we know that. Either the minister is not telling the truth or the lobbyists aren't. That's why the committee hearings are going to help us discover which—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** I would ask the member to withdraw that last comment.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** I withdraw that, of course, and I withdraw anything else in advance that I say that's unparliamentary.

We're going to find out what's going on if the government allows committee hearings, but then again, they may not.

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

**Mr. Bob Delaney:** I am shocked, absolutely shocked, to discover today that the leader of the NDP has accepted \$1,000 from Union Gas, meaning that the consumers of Union Gas paid for her political leadership campaign in 2009; that the NDP accepted a donation from Enwave; that the NDP took a \$7,000 donation from Suncor. But imagine this: Despite all of that, the foundations of democracy in the province of Ontario stood tall. We managed.

I say to my esteemed colleague, indeed in many ways my role model from Welland, someone whom I absolutely really enjoy following, a blacker pot has not cast aspersions upon a kettle.

In the seven years and change that I have had the privilege and the responsibility of working on behalf the folks in western Mississauga, in our neighbourhoods of Meadowvale and Streetsville and Lisgar, I've seen some lobbyists from trade associations, and I've seen some lobbyists representing clients in the private sector, but never from my hospital, never from my electricity distribution company, never from my gas distribution company, never from my community care access centre, never from the region and never from any partner that takes or uses public sector funds. They don't need to. They all know that they can pick up the telephone and they can call me up as their MPP. They can call up any of my colleagues as their MPP. When they make a call to us, our telephone gets answered, and their calls get returned. We do our business, and we make the system work.

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The member from Welland is always informative and also entertaining and brings a lot of insight, I think, into the debate of the day in terms of this particular one, and I do commend him.

Anyone who cites someone else's faults should also take a look at their own. No one here is perfect, but I think we're all, each day—if you look at today, I think there were three themes of the day that all involved some sort of consultant doing some kind of work. At the end of the day, the three groups that I was aware—today is the network on literacy week. The theme is gender and the

media. There's a lobby group that worked that campaign. There's another group here today, on chronic pain—I think they had a reception—and also another group, from my riding, about the diet that's allowed for a person on social assistance.

I think when you look at it, we're all influenced by it, so I think it's wrong to point fingers. There are probably legitimate roles for some of those to educate us. How it's done, often, is really what's in question here.

Certainly, in the public's mind, hospitals and the way the current system is set up under the local health integration networks—we find that we have a group lobbying a group that's lobbying a group, and actually you can't get to see the Minister of Health. That probably is where this thing really came to a head, when we had hospitals hiring lobbyists, if you will—consultant groups—to get to the minister, when in fact they're supposed to go through the LHIN. The LHIN was set up, really, as a filter against getting to the minister.

It seems rather redundant and certainly a waste of money when in fact we have people and children and elderly people waiting to get into long-term care and for other access to treatment. It's a waste of money in a public service that's underfunded today.

It's a complex issue, but certainly this government brings a bill in—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Thank you. The member from Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Would that all members were like my friend from Welland, because if they were, we would put lobbyists out of business in no time flat. Would that the member from Welland were a minister in that portfolio. Lobbyists would be out of business in no time at all.

I support his call for hearings, because we need to hear from the lobbyists. They'll be there, and they'll be there in great numbers, extolling their virtues and talking about why they need to be there: because they have a job to do. You'll hear them. I think the government and the opposition members need to hear that point of view. I think the government wants to hear that point of view, and it's for that reason that I believe, contrary to my friend from Welland, that there will be hearings, because they'll want to hear them as much as we do.

I want to be able to hear some of those folks talk about whether or not this bill has any loopholes in it, because we believe there are. We know that if you are receiving private dollars, you can hire whoever you want. You can name them whatever you want, you can hire whoever you want and they'll be carrying on as if nothing ever happened before. But the government will have the luxury of saying, "We got rid of lobbyists. They ain't going to be able to do what they did before, no siree, no, because of this bill, G122."

The fact of the matter is, this bill doesn't get rid of them. It just says that if you're getting public dollars, you won't be able to do what you used to do, but if you get private dollars, continue doing what you've always done, and God bless.

I congratulate the member from Welland. I'm looking forward to those hearings, and I'm looking forward to the minister saying, "We're happy to have them."

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

**Mr. David Zimmer:** I too am shocked at the leader of the third party for some of her ad hominem attacks on this issue when I see that it turns out she herself received \$1,000 from Union Gas for her leadership race and several thousand dollars from Enwave Energy and Suncor. A public utility, Five Nations Energy: \$1,200 to her NDP campaigns—Five Nations Energy. That's a non-profit public utility owned by the Attawapiskat, Fort Albany and Kashechewan Nations. Imagine taking money from those public utilities, owned by aboriginal groups.

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But it's not surprising that I hear these comments from the leader of the third party. When I hear her speak with this feigned anger, shock and frustration, I'm reminded of the quote, "Methinks the lady doth protest too much," or even a better one: "You shouldn't throw stones if you live in a glass house."

Compare that to our Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. It's comprehensive; it covers lobbying in any form or nature from those organizations that are receiving public monies to operate, because the principle is, you ought not to take money that you receive from the government to hire people to ask the government to give you more money.

Everybody agrees that's the right thing to do, the lobbyists themselves feel that's the right thing to do and certainly the institutions feel it's the right thing to do.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Welland has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Peter Kormos:** Aw, I wish I had 20—I need it—because you've got to understand that the last speaker, the parliamentary assistant, was less than accurate in his interpretation of the legislation. You see, it only covers lobbyists who are consultant lobbyists, and that is to say lobbyists who are retained on contract. It specifically says that it doesn't cover in-house lobbyists. The lobby industry is already planning its campaign to discuss with all schools, hospitals and municipalities—and the government knows this because they designed the bill to accommodate lobbyists being hired as in-house lobbyists, in-house government relations people. So there's going to be no less money spent.

The bill also makes it very clear that you can't spend public monies—to wit, the money you receive from the government—to pay for a lobbyist. Not only will it permit and encourage high-priced in-house lobbyists, but it very specifically will include lobbyists who are paid for out of funds other than funds provided specifically by the government. So the lobbyists who organize the fundraising for the hospital will then argue that the money they raised fundraising with your local gala—or what do they call it; people play golf and do all sorts of things—the lobbyists will say, "Well, look, this is why this is being done: so that you can hire us to lobby for you with a government that's inaccessible." Lobbyists

insist that they're imperative. They're the grease that makes the wheels turn.

The bill is very, very narrow and not very restrictive at all. Please read the bill; read the legislation. It ain't rocket science. The government has conveniently accommodated lobbyists and consultants of all stripes, all sizes, all shapes, and at all sorts of expense. The lobbyists and consultants will continue to drain money away from education, from health care, from municipal services, and will pour money into the coffers of the Ontario Liberal Party.

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

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I'm pleased to have 20 minutes this afternoon to put some remarks on the record with regard to Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. Before I get into my personal remarks, I just want to read a bit of the formality of what it is that this legislation is going to do.

As we know, the Auditor General brought in his report on October 20, and on the same day, our Minister Deb Matthews introduced this particular piece of legislation. If passed, this is what the legislation is going to do. It's going to prohibit all agencies, designated broader public sector organizations, hydro entities and most organizations that receive more than \$10 million in public funds from using public funds to retain lobbyists. It's going to increase accountability in the broader public sector by requiring some of the broader public sector entities and organizations to follow standards established by the Management Board of Cabinet on procurement. It's going to require each LHIN and hospital to submit a report on its use of consultants. It's going to require each LHIN and hospital to post on their public websites information about their expense claims. It's going to require each broader public sector org to comply with regs, if any, which require the public posting of expenses. Additionally, it's going to establish expense claim rules for designated broader public sector orgs and guidelines for publicly funded organizations, and also increase accountability and transparency in hospitals and LHINs by requiring the head of the organization to annually submit a report to the minister attesting to the completion and accuracy of reports required on the use of consultants, the organization's compliance with the prohibition of retaining a lobbyist using public funds, the organization's compliance with procurement directives issued by Management Board, and the organization's compliance with the expense claim directives issued by Management Board. Finally, subject to passing, it will make hospitals subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, effective January 1, 2012. That's what Bill 122 is going to do.

Now I would like to spend just a bit of time letting people following this debate on television know how it is that we arrived here. It has probably been mentioned before, but it bears mentioning again.

Some years ago, when we first were elected to government, it was we as a Liberal government that expanded the authority of the Auditor General to in fact

give the auditor this authority that has led to the report that has come to us today. Previous to that, the auditor could not have investigated LHINs, he could not have investigated hospitals, and the report that's before us, that has led to this legislation, is something that we would not have been able to see. Perhaps when the opposition parties have an opportunity to speak further on this bill, they'll explain why, when they had the opportunity and the privilege to be government in the province of Ontario, they did not extend that same authority to the Auditor General. As we know, as a result of that, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts—they went off and they used this new authority, and the report that he tabled led us to where we are today. That is our government's response: Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act.

At its core, at its heart, what the legislation is about is transparency and accountability. Like all members, I took a keen interest in the municipal elections that occurred in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, the city of Thunder Bay and the surrounding municipalities in my riding. I can tell you that the issues of transparency and accountability were on the lips of most people, on the lips of most candidates. Whether or not it is justified, it seems like in municipalities there is an interest with the voters that all orders of government, be they municipal, provincial or federal, need to be more transparent, more accountable than they currently are being. Whether or not it's the case, people feel it, and they want to see it. This legislation is responding to that, as I said.

There are a few things that I want to talk about briefly that when we think about transparency and accountability are not items that the electorate would probably consider or think about. But they are issues that, as a government, we've addressed. Before I get to the more formal list—and that's a relatively expansive list, a list that in fact members of the opposition voted against when we tried to provide a little bit of sunshine and to provide more transparency and accountability. I'll get to that list later. But I have a few things as examples that I want to illustrate for people following this debate on TV that we in fact did years ago, long before this issue got us to the point that we're at today.

Number one: In the election of 2003, as an example of our government commitment to more transparency and more accountability, we came in, and the voters may remember that in very short order, the auditor of the day had identified that we had inherited a \$5.5-billion deficit. Going into the election of 2003, the opposition party today, the government of the day at that time, was clearly articulating to the electorate that the books were balanced, and maybe that there was a little surplus—I don't remember if they were saying there was a surplus or not. But clearly they were articulating that there was no deficit. When we came in, an auditor number, not a government number, indicated that there was indeed a \$5.5-billion deficit.

What did we do in response? We brought in legislation that ensured that can never happen again. So from now on, going into every provincial election, the Auditor

General will provide a snapshot of the finances of the province so that, going into the election, the electorate will know exactly what the state of the books of the province of Ontario is. We did that. That's extremely transparent and that's being extremely accountable, I would suggest. That's one of the things we did. We did that probably five or six years ago.

**1620**

October 6 next year, 2011, there will be a provincial election. Premier McGuinty and our government brought in legislation—only the second province in Canada to do so—establishing fixed election days. We can all tell around this place that the election has long since started. We can tell by the tenor of the debate. We can tell by the tone of the debate. In fact, the official opposition is running television commercials all the time already. Had they not known that there was going to be an election on October 6 of next year, I don't imagine they'd be running those TV commercials now, but the target is there, the focus is there. As a government, we brought in that legislation. By so doing, the Premier and the government of the day gave up quite a bit of power, I would say, in terms of the ability to pick the election date to best suit the purposes of the government of the day. We gave that up. Now it's transparent. You can't manipulate the timing of the election to best serve your own purposes. That's next year. That'll be the second such time that's occurred under our watch.

A third thing that I think people don't often think about when it comes to transparency and accountability refers back to the election of 2003, as well. I mentioned this last week in a two-minuter in response to one of the other members' speeches. In 2003, the election results came in and the third party, the NDP, elected eight members to the Legislature. To have official party status in the Legislature, according to the standing rules, I think it was 12 that you needed. They did not have official party status. Our government changed the rules. We amended the standing orders to accommodate the eight members from the third party that were here, and by so doing, I think we flowed about \$1 million in resource to the eight members representing the third party here so that they could play a vigorous role in terms of trying to represent the interests of their constituents to the people of the province of Ontario. We didn't have to do that, but we did it. Along with that, I think the leader of the third party at the time also got a \$30,000 or \$40,000 raise. I can't remember for sure. But \$1 million of resource went to the third party. We changed the rule. We didn't have to do that. They had eight members elected. The rule said you have to have 12 to be an official party to get all that resource. We did it. I think of that in terms of transparency. I think of that in terms of accountability. I don't know if other people do, but I think that's pretty significant.

For the last little while in this place, the opposition parties have been having some fun when it comes to the LHINs, local health integration networks. They've become a bit of a bureaucratic, political piñata. They're taking their turns whacking their big stick against the

LHINs. Apparently, they've decided that the LHIN organizations, as part of the health care system in Ontario, are going to be one of the issues that they plant their ideological flags on as they go into the next election on October 6, 2011. They're going to use this as something to exhibit to the people of the province that we fumbled health care, when in fact nothing could be further from the truth. I'm not sure why they're going there. They think it's an easy one to do.

I want to tell you where I come from on the LHINs. I remember when I was first elected, one of the things the people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan disliked the most was they felt that the people in the south didn't get it when it came to decision-making on a lot of issues, especially health care. With the centralized bureaucracy that existed in Ontario with the Ministry of Health, they thought that all the decision-making authority rested here in southern Ontario, in Toronto, and that all of those decisions oftentimes did not reflect, did not consider, did not understand, did not get, the reality of what was northern Ontario. People would come into my office on a regular basis with that complaint. They said, "They don't get it."

So when we rolled out LHINs three or four years ago—and if people want to stand in their place and say that they're not doing a good job, they need to get better, they're still evolving, they're only about three years old, they want to cast some criticism and say they can do better, I'm okay with that. That's fine. But it sounds to me like the opposition parties want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. I assume they're going to cancel them. If they had the opportunity and the privilege to represent the people of the province of Ontario in government, it sounds to me like they would throw them out, cancel them.

What would it mean if they do that? Well, back to the way it was, I suppose—back to recentralizing all the decision-making in southern Ontario; taking the decision-making away, in my context, from the North West LHIN headquartered in the city of Thunder Bay, representing my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. They want to take all of the decision-making away from them and put it back here in southern Ontario. I don't favour that. They want to take all the jobs back, they want to take all the investment back, they want to take all the power and the authority back and put it down here in Toronto. I don't favour that.

You want to tell me the LHINs aren't working as well as they should? Fair game. Let's make them better, but I don't want to get rid of them. What's next? You want to get rid of the LHINs and bring all the authority and decision-making back down here on health care? Do you want to do it for education, too? School boards and trustees, are we going to get rid of them as well so that their local impact on decision-making in northwestern Ontario and in Thunder Bay is the same? We'll bring all that decision-making back down here to southern Ontario and put all that in Toronto as well? I don't get it.

They've decided that LHINs, as I've said, are going to be this bureaucratic, political piñata. They have been for

about six months or a year, and I guess going forward into the next election it's going to stay that way for a while. God bless. But I'll tell you, as somebody who represents a northern Ontario riding, I don't favour it. If they're not working perfectly, that's okay; you can make that criticism. There have been times when I've been sitting in my office and watching some of the communications that come out. I pause and think as well and find that it's not perfect. But I'm very interested in people in Thunder Bay, in Atikokan, in Oliver Paipooonge, in Marathon, in Manitouwadge, having some control and input through their LHIN, through that board of directors, in terms of local decision-making and in terms of how those billions of dollars that we invest in health care are spent.

When I was first elected, stakeholder after stakeholder would come into my office and complain about the fact that, historically, hospitals in the province of Ontario would always overspend their budgets and the government of the day, no matter who it was, would always accommodate that over-expenditure and they would find the money to keep funnelling it into the hospitals. All of those other health care stakeholders who delivered services in the province of Ontario would feel like they were constantly getting short-changed and did not have enough money to deliver the services as they saw fit or as they wished they could have.

What do the LHINs do? One of the things we let the LHINs do is sign accountability agreements with their hospitals. So now they go in on an annual basis. The hospitals know you get X, you sign on the dotted line and you don't get any more. If you go over, we've got a problem. The other health care providers who get some of that \$45 billion that we spend every year on health care in the province of Ontario—which, by the way, is \$15 billion more per year than when we came in, in 2003—now those other health care providers like that. They get it. That's one of the authorities that the LHINs have. So they set that standard. They set the template and they help with that sort of decision-making and keep it local, and they can send those resources where they think they're best needed. Are they perfect? No, they're not. That's not a criticism; that's an observation.

One of the things that we brought back when it comes to transparency and accountability is freedom of information. My friend across the way from Durham—I'm interested in sharing this one with him, and perhaps if he does a two-minuter, he can explain it to me, because I'm not sure why they did this. We brought back freedom-of-information accessibility to Hydro One and OPG. I didn't say we gave access to Hydro One and OPG, I said we had to give it back to them, which of course implies that they used to have it but somebody took it away. Why would somebody take freedom-of-information accessibility away from the people in the province of Ontario when it came to Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One? I think it was the opposition that took it away from them. I'm not sure why. Maybe my friend from Durham, if he's doing a two-minuter, will be able to tell us why they did it. We had to bring it back and give it to them. Perhaps my friend over there will be able to tell us why.

Municipalities, when it comes to this particular legislation, are going to remain exempt. They are not subject to the provisions of this legislation, and the reason is quite clear: Municipalities have, beyond what flows to them from the province of Ontario, significant revenue streams that are non-provincial in nature. We feel that, given the residential property tax base—which I would say, in the context of most municipalities, represents their biggest revenue stream—it's not for us to be dictating to the municipalities in this particular piece of legislation how and what it is they should do with that money. When it comes to Bill 122, this particular piece of legislation, we are not going to tell municipalities what they may do with that money and how.

Having said that, I don't mind saying that in my community, my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I'd like to think and believe that the municipal councillors there, past and present, the mayors, past and present, people interested in any issue of relevance when it comes to the expenditure of provincial dollars don't feel that they necessarily would need to go out and hire a lobbyist to get access to the decision-makers in the government of Ontario.

**1630**

I would like to think they feel, and have had the experience, that since my election in 2003, I'm there; I'm their conduit. But, having said that—and I could say the same for my colleague from Thunder Bay–Superior North: They see us; they know we're there to work for them. They know we're there to fight for them and make their case to the province of Ontario. I'm sure that all the MPPs here feel that way when they work with their mayors, councils, reeves and wardens all across the province. For that reason, we left the municipalities exempt. We don't feel that they need to be part of this particular piece of legislation. As a result of that, they will remain exempt.

There's been some discussion. The member from—

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Welland.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Thank you. The member from Welland, who spoke earlier, talked about his perception of one of the holes in the legislation, that the legislation only deals with public tax dollars. Well, that's what the Auditor General's report dealt with. The legislation, Bill 122, is responding to the Auditor General's report.

We're saying we don't think it's okay for you to take public tax dollars. We don't understand why you would need to in the first place, as a hospital or a LHIN. Why do you need to take public tax dollars and hire a lobbyist? We're responding to the Auditor General. We don't think they should either.

He went on to say, "Well, they left a big loophole in the legislation. They are going to bring it in-house. They are going to find, through their other revenue streams"—and hospitals have other revenue streams. They get money through parking; they get money from televisions in the hospital rooms; they get money through private donations and foundations. Those funds are there. They're up to the discretion of the hospital boards, I would guess, to use as they see fit.

Perhaps from time to time they might find a circumstance—maybe they're working with an MPP who they don't think has access; I don't know. Maybe they're working with somebody—I don't need to mention any ridings. Maybe they feel there's a need that they could justifiably make their case, that they can't get forward, that they can't move their issue ahead. They want to use that money that's been donated privately by the people who are making donations. I guess that's going to be up to them. If there are others who feel differently, that's fine. But if I'm somebody who's contributing to a foundation, if I'm privately making my contribution to a hospital foundation, I think that I'd be a little bit reluctant to listen to somebody in a political party telling me how I thought it was okay for that money to be spent. I'm not sure we necessarily want to go that way.

We have moved the yardsticks significantly forward when it comes to issues related to transparency and accountability in the province of Ontario. People know that. We have reintroduced transparency and accountability in areas of provincial jurisdiction—OPG and Hydro One used to have it—that had that capacity removed by previous governments, by previous parties in the province of Ontario.

By any standard, we have moved the yardsticks significantly forward.

Should it be the will of Legislature, should Bill 122 pass over the course of the next few weeks, this legislation is going to build on work that was previously done by our government and will continue to enhance transparency and accountability for people in the province of Ontario.

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

**Mrs. Christine Elliott:** I am pleased to have the opportunity just to make a few comments with respect to Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector, which of course, for those people who are watching this debate, basically says that any organizations that are funded by the Ontario government can't use public funds to lobby the government. It sounds pretty straightforward.

I did listen to the comments that were made by the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and his comment that the McGuinty government has been so open and transparent and so proactive about being so. But I think that's absolutely not the case. In fact, it's only been when this government has been dragged kicking and screaming by the auditor that they've really come forward and made any changes whatsoever.

It certainly is, in the case here, that this bill arose out of a very, very bad report by the Auditor General on the use of consultants and lobbyists in hospitals and LHINs, which comes on the heels of another report, just about the same time last year, on eHealth.

The present situation we refer to as eHealth 2.0, because it talks about lessons that this government really didn't learn from the eHealth report from last year, when over a billion dollars was essentially wasted on consultants rather than going into the building of a proper

electronic health system, which we absolutely need here in the province of Ontario. The Auditor General, for those who are making comments in the background here, even commented on this himself. When he was at his press conference introducing the most recent report, he said he was surprised that the government hadn't learned the lessons and it was still continuing to be a problem because he would have thought that these issues would have been addressed. They haven't, and they'll continue to be a problem.

This government just doesn't seem to get it. If they had, they would have agreed to Bill 39—

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

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I'll be speaking in about half an hour and I'll have a few more things to say, but I was interested in a couple of the comments that the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan made. One was a reference to the generosity of the Liberal Party after the 2003 election, when New Democrats had been decimated. He makes the case that in order to have status, you needed 12 members, and it went to eight members. He might have forgotten that we had seven, so we had to win the eighth member in a by-election that allowed us to get to that generous eight.

Just a little glaring gap that you might have overlooked in terms of your generosity: You won a huge majority by appealing to strategic voters so that you could defeat the evil Tories. What you appealed to was the good sentiments of so many good New Democrats, when you told them, "We have to defeat the Tories because they're so bad, and in order to do that, we need you good New Democrats to vote for us"—and many did. You managed to get a good victory by getting so many New Democrats to vote for you. As a result, through the pressure of the Toronto Star, you managed to find a little generosity, in spite of the many months that you delayed to respond to the calls of many saying that we needed to be there as a legitimate third party because you might want to listen to the third party appeals. I just thought I would add that to the clarification of issues.

You made reference to the Tories perhaps wanting to centralize education and what those poor trustees would do. I just want to remind the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan that we in effect have a centralized system, something that you seem to be committed to, where the trustees are powerless and have very little to say. I thought I would remind you of that before I get to my speech in half an hour.

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

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I think the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan articulated a position extremely well in terms of Bill 122.

In my case, I have three large public institutions in my riding: the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, Trent University and Fleming College. I know they've never used any precious government dollars to hire lobbyists. They continue to meet me on a monthly basis so I can advocate on their behalf.

I find it passing strange: a little event that's taking place on Saturday, November 27, 2010, from 6 to 8 p.m., at the Palais Royale. It says, "Please join us this year at the Palais Royale. For 86 years, this Toronto landmark on the lakeshore has provided a window into a bygone era of year of big music, style and elegance." I notice that the signature on this letter of invitation is from Sandra Clifford, the president of the Ontario New Democratic Party, asking people to buy tickets at \$1,000 a crack to enjoy lobster bisque—and I'm sure they will be having icewine at \$200 a bottle. I hope they buy it from Pillitteri Estates in the Niagara Peninsula. As John Ivison put it so well in his article in the National Post, "NDP Happy to Dance with 'High-Priced, Well-Connected Insiders.'" So I find that this is a very, very interesting position that has been put forward by the third party. Indeed, I will be eagerly awaiting speeches later this afternoon defending that kind of interesting invitation that's been sent out to all the lobby firms in the province of Ontario, so they can rub shoulders with the leader of the third party. I understand that Olivia and Jack will be there, in all their true elegance, to raise money—

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

1640

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I think the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan did pose a couple of questions and remarks, and rightfully so. He was talking about the freedom-of-information provisions. I think he's a very genuine member. Anyway, I think it's important that he maybe look at the history sometimes, because often the history is a good indicator of why things have changed.

I think what's important—when they restructured the old Ontario Hydro, the person who commissioned the fundamental report was Donald Macdonald. It's often referred to as the Macdonald commission report. He talked about the structure known then as Ontario Hydro. Of course, when they restructured it, they created Hydro One, which is the distribution network, and OPG, Ontario Power Generation. In fact, the other part was the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator. Some of those components did operate in the branches of the Ministry of Energy, but that's what happened.

The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan might know that when the restructuring occurred, some of the provisions and drafting were transitional, and there were a lot of very difficult decisions that were made in that restructuring. Sadly, the system design that was recommended by the design committee—our interim leader, Premier Eves, sort of backed away from it at the last moment, which was not probably the right thing to do.

**Mr. Gerry Martiniuk:** Among other things.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Among other things. He got nervous, if you will, and I think for the right reasons, too; the economy was softening. Anyway, that explains that part.

But under this particular bill—I'm going to speak next. In this bill, you'll find out that there's quite a bit of softening in it. In fact, it's so badly watered down it's

like cheap gruel, actually. Anyway, we will talk about that shortly here.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I want to thank the members from Whitby–Oshawa, Trinity–Spadina, Peterborough and Durham for their comments.

To the member from Durham, thank you for confirming, in fact, that it was your government that removed the FOI capacity—

**Mr. John O’Toole:** It was through restructuring.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Well, through restructuring or otherwise. Who brought in the restructuring to OPG and Hydro One? It was a mistake. The restructuring was a mistake, and the reason he had to go back on it is because, when you deregulated the market, you had to bring in a price cap. When it went from 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour, you capped it, because in a deregulated market, I think you were buying it at about 99 cents a kilowatt hour for a little while. We ended with about a billion dollars on a stranded debt overnight, pretty much.

To the member from Peterborough, thank you very much for his supportive comments.

To the member from Trinity–Spadina, he seems to be harbouring some criticism, I guess, about the way people voted in 2003. Second-guessing the will of the electorate—as they always say, the voters are never wrong. It was an interesting spin that he put on what occurred there.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** No, I was speaking to your generosity.

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** Okay, well, I appreciated that as well. I don’t necessarily want to use that language, but I would say that it was something that we did not have to do, and we did, and it was significant. It enabled you. It was helpful to you. I’m sure you would acknowledge that.

To the member from Whitby–Oshawa, who seemed in her two minutes to imply to the people following the debate that Bill 122 is a reaction, that this is the only thing we’ve done when it comes to transparency and accountability in the province of Ontario, as it is because of the Auditor General’s report, I would say: Listen; of course not. In my 20 minutes, I listed lots of other things that we have done, and it’s important to remind people that the Auditor General could only bring that report here because we gave him the power to do it. Before we gave him the authority to do it, he couldn’t have brought the report here, and we did that some time ago. So to imply that this is johnny-come-lately stuff in response to the AG is nonsense. We gave him the ability to do this. You didn’t and they didn’t. We did it.

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

**Mr. John O’Toole:** I am anxious to shed some light on this bill. Here’s a good reference—it’s always good to start by looking at what was the genesis of the bill itself. The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan just spoke

briefly here. He did recognize that the auditor’s report was issued, I believe, on October 20. Oddly enough, that was the same date they issued the legislation. They knew that they were failing.

This thinly disguised bill was an admission by Premier McGuinty that they have failed miserably. If you look further back into the litany of tragedies that have occurred under their leadership, you’ll find that the OLG—the auditor caught them there and issued a report. They tried to fix that, and it’s still a miserable mess.

I could tell you that I’ve heard from people that the OLG in Belleville, I think it is, has a serious problem. It’s not in the public yet, but I’m tipping the media; they should be listening here. If they look into the Belleville racetrack casino, I’m told—under good advice and protecting the people that would tell you these things—that this is another serious problem of mismanagement about to explode.

This bill is so artificial. I’m going to read the preamble, Madam Speaker, with your indulgence. Bill 122 has 10 parts to it; it’s 21 pages and was drafted rather quickly. Here’s the tough language. It’s almost laughable. I don’t blame the civil servants. They were probably directed by cabinet to not make this too onerous because of the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, which they’re probably opposed to.

The government services minister, Mr. Takhar, in the past has said that they’re going to post all the expenses. Well, I’ve done a bit of research. None of them are posted. I think two out of 22 are posted. They say one thing, but the delivery is where the evidence is.

Sticking to the point here, I’m going to read the preamble. This is not a political statement. This is reading this bill here. It says, “Various organizations are prohibited from engaging lobbyists who are paid with public funds.” Well, if you had a foundation raising funds, is that public funds? Those would be tax-receptable funds, by the way, too. You’ve got to look at the skilful language here. It’s sort of obfuscation, really, in a way; it’s avoidance of the issue, okay? It continues, “and, in some cases, with revenues generated by the organization.” It’s a little bit ambiguous.

“Local health integration networks and hospitals are required to report on their use of consultants.” They have to issue a financial statement every year. They’re supposed to be audited, and it should show in there. What have they been doing for seven years? How come now they’re starting to realize there’s a fair amount of leakage from these organizations when, in fact, they’re spending money that’s not being spent on patients? That’s what the public is concerned about here; patients are waiting for various therapies.

I’m dealing with one now. This young family is dealing with an eating disorder issue, and I’m told that there are absolutely no services east of Toronto for a person with an eating disorder which could be covered under mental health as an addictive treatment that’s required. It’s tragic. The service levels here are in the ditch.

What was the first thing this government did? It hiked this new tax called the health tax. Yet what I see is this: I

see almost every hospital begging, using lobbyists, to get their share of the money. Where's the money going? It's going to the LHINs. What are they doing? New furniture, consultants, trips.

Look, this is the truth of it all. The auditor must be appalled, and I'm sure he, out of respect, didn't tell the whole story; he just told what was essential.

Then we see that the bill is already drafted. He introduced it, and they try to blow it off the front page by managing the message, by issuing the bill. They bring out Bill 122—problem solved. I don't think so.

I'm going to get on to the specific wording here. This is the tough language of the bill. "The Management Board of Cabinet"—this is key work; this is legal—"may issue directives and guidelines concerning allowable expenses and procurement on the part of designated broader public sector organizations and publicly funded organizations." The issue here is "may." A real intent to resolve the issue would say "shall," not "may." It's like trying to catch a rabbit: By the time you catch it, it's already generated four other rabbits. This is what I call, "They really don't want to solve this problem." They're saying, "We fixed it." They haven't fixed it.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** No, no, no; they haven't fixed it. It has been going on—

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** Send a memo.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The other minister is now speaking. She should know, because her ministry is in huge trouble. Every ministry over there is hemorrhaging debt. Children's aid is another example of an organization, and special needs at home. Those communities are all suffering.

You're wasting the money. It says it right in here, and you admit it. Now you've got a bill. It's not fixing the problem, though. Fix the problem by dealing with open accountability.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Order.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** Here's the one on the LHINs. I'm being deflected here. This is right from the bill itself, this thinly disguised bowl of gruel: "Local health integration networks, hospitals, and other organizations, if so required"—that really strengthens the statement, "if so required"; who's going to say it's required?—"by the regulations, are required to report on their compliance with provisions." What it should say is, "shall report annually," period; no ambiguity about that whatsoever. That's what's missing.

**1650**

This is the integrity of the bill, the idea I support. But how they've drafted this is like a maze. Are they supposed to? It says "may" here, or "if so required."

Now, what I've really determined, after talking to several very reputable organizations—and they're not all to be painted by this government as bad. Here's the issue: If you have a one-time issue that needs to be resolved by a group of experts, like the university Professor Arthurs who issued the report on pensions, I think that's an

appropriate expense of government, to hire an expert to look and give you the right information at the right time with some right suggestions. Now, when it's over with, the government drafts laws which are then enforced by the pension organizations within the government. That's fine. Under fiscal, I guess it's called.

But here's the issue: That's good consulting, but when you're consulting about scarce dollars, that's lobbying. That's what this is about, using lobbyists to buy tickets to the leader's dinner, entertain members somehow at various functions; in fact, trying to get to the table—it's queue-jumping, in my view. There are organizations using public money, and that isn't acceptable, in my view.

I think the Minister of Health or whatever minister is under siege, and obviously health is going to get—it's growing exponentially with an aging population. They have no money now for long-term care. You know that yourself. They have a new strategy: aging at home. What that really means is aging alone because often their children and grandchildren are trying to look after them, and they're so busy, they're actually ignoring them. And they're not building one new long-term-care bed. So it's primarily the health care.

Now, the other one is the universities. What have we got in universities? We have the highest tuition in the country, and now they're lobbying to get what they need to get the job done and they're not having a fair process of access.

On top of that—I think this is the whole thing, at the bottom line—they are drowning in debt now, the province—drowning in it. They're raising electricity. They're raising the HST. They have all these problems after seven years; the people are completely exhausted by dragging this government around. You can't get to them unless you buy tickets to the dinners.

What's happening really is, the lobbyist part of this business: I think we all concur with the right of accountability. We agree with that provision totally. But now what's going to happen? They're going to be hiring the lobbyists full-time so they'll be in-house and they'll have the full pension plan, and maybe they only need them to do a study on long-term care or the extent of diabetes or other kinds of medically necessary procedures, about which you need a group to come in and talk to the minister and the members to educate them, and that's perfectly in order.

As I said today, here at the Legislature of Ontario there were three groups wanting our attention; one was Literacy Week, which is thematically working on gender in the media. Literacy was one of them. The other one was on chronic pain management, and there was lobbying on that here today. I think it's education more than lobbying. There was another one here as well on feeding the need. That's trying to understand how difficult it is in poverty in Ontario.

But that is the real essence here. This bill simply doesn't get it done. It was drafted cynically to take the story the auditor issued off the front page and say, "We've got the problem solved." It isn't solved, and it's

so cynical to let the people of Ontario go away or listen to this debate this afternoon from the government members reading the crafted speeches they were given by the same consultants and trying to make us believe they've solved this problem. In fact, they're going down the hill rather quickly here. The people of Ontario are on to it, and they're not going to put up with it anymore. I don't say that everything they're doing is bad, but most things are; not everything, though. They are still salvageable, to some extent.

Today what's really important is to stay tuned, watch carefully and don't let them blow it by you without a lot of questions being asked. I see the Minister of Finance quite regularly referring as far back as Sir John A. Macdonald when he wants to blame somebody for something. Even today, earlier in the questions, they were blaming other governments. In fact, there was a debate; they were blaming the federal government for things.

You've had the steering wheel for a number of years, and now we're starting to bounce off telephone poles. You've got to learn how to drive the message and stay tuned and stay disciplined to try to achieve what's right for the people of Ontario.

In a troubled economy—it's not all your fault; I understand that—first of all, you have to recognize you have a problem. Before you can recover, you have to admit, "I have a problem." That seven-step plan or whatever it is that's needed to be taken is the first step, and I think this bill doesn't do that. This bill here, as I've seen it, is paving the way for hiring more consultants inside the various ministries to do some media management and some messaging. That's what I see.

The cynical part, as I said, to repeat myself again, is that the auditor's report was filed on the 20th. They already had the bill. They filed the bill on the same day—if that doesn't tell you something. They just want this story to go away. They really do.

If there was more accountability built into it—one of the best media plans managed under the Ministry of Health, I think, in fairness, was when they pulled the funding out of the promotional allowances for the pharmacists. The pharmacists were lined up 10 deep, mad as heck about this issue, and somehow the message has sort of gone away a bit on that, on managing the thing on the pharmacists.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** No, the Minister of Health is here now and she has been hoodwinked too, I think.

Here's the issue: What I'm hearing from a former member of the OPA, who lives in my riding—I have respect for him. Right now, what's happened is, the Shoppers part has sort of gone away; they're sort of onside. They've left the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. They got their way somehow, and the independents are now going to survive—the real issue here is that pharmacy services in rural Ontario will be lost.

Another thing is where they use crafty lobbyists, and some of those lobbyists certainly got to the minister—probably through the dinners they had.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Order.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** All I'm saying is that there are very reputable groups. I think of Navigators, one of the top, over the 15 years that I have been sitting and trying to listen to reasonable arguments—but then somebody mentioned here that the group Courtyard is notorious as being loaded with Liberal-friendly members. And when you get that kind of mixed, caustic, acidic environment around you, it's going to corrupt it somehow and contaminate it.

I don't directly blame the minister. This is the key thing. I actually directly blame the Premier. He's in charge. He's the one signing the cheques at the end of the day. It's out of control right across the board.

WSIB has a problem. Name one organization that doesn't. OLG has a problem. Health care has a problem. The children's aid society has a problem. Name one: The 407, the new-build nuclear, energy—the whole thing is going down the hill rather quickly. I hope it can last for another year or so. They may have to call a quick election.

The other part of this whole debate today though is that the use of lobbyists here has become rather skilful and rather stealthy over the last several years. They're insiders who are both on the political side, as well as the lobbyist side, and they seem to have the ear. They messed up on the eco tax. They screwed that up. They didn't release that properly. The eco tax, I think John Gerretsen was given a time bomb to—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Would you mention by ministry, please?

**Mr. John O'Toole:** He was the Minister of the Environment at the time, the member from Kingston and the Islands. Is he still in cabinet? Yes, he is; pardon me.

I think they handed him a bad policy. It was poorly thought out, poorly implemented. In fact, it was just plain wrong. Then they implemented it at the same time as the HST. How cynical is that? They thought there would be such a blow-up about the HST that no one would recognize the eco tax.

**1700**

Even there, the cynical part of this whole thing is, when they're withdrawing the eco tax, it should have said until after the next election, because they still have a revenue problem, big time. They've got \$20 billion in the ditch. They're \$20 billion in the hole—\$20 billion. That's 20% of the budget that they don't have. They're short 20% of their spending. They have a serious spending problem. So this year there's more spending, wasteful spending. In fact, the auditor's report suggests—most of it here is very specific. It prohibits organizations from "engaging lobbyists who are paid with public funds." I support that goal.

I think our leader, Tim Hudak, is very hard on making sure of accountability right through, and I think that's what the people of Ontario want. They want more accountability and they want firm, honest leadership—firm and fair leadership. That's really what I see coming. I saw that, actually, in the municipal election. People are fed up with these people who promise one thing and do

another, and that kind of summarizes what we've had. They promised to close the coal plants. How many have they closed? None. What have they bought? Seventy-one-cent energy from solar panels covered with snow or ice or something.

Look, I can't say everything they've done is bad, but I would say they have kind of lost their way. Without being personal in any way, they've sort of lost the energy or the desire, and they're just sort of struggling to the goal line. It's hard to see if they'll make it there.

But, no, in fairness, the economy is not all their fault. It's a good part of it, but not all their fault. But they've raised taxes, they've increased spending, and you have to ask yourself, is it any better? Is it any better at the gas station? Is it any better in your home? Is it any better in our schools? They're raising \$30,000 in one of our local schools—unbelievable—and there's a target set for every class of how much they have to raise. It's a new tax. It's not the eco tax; it's a school tax. They've got kids collecting it now. When I look around, I'm troubled, but I know they've tried and they have just run out of energy and ideas. Really, it's that simple. I mean, it's not personal. It's just a case that they've worked hard, the economy has gone south on them, and it's like a business: They are going to have to close the door, really. It sounds to me like they're already preparing the exit plan, an exit strategy of some sort. But in fairness, it's not all their fault. Some of it is Stephen Harper's fault; probably some of it is Jean Chrétien's fault. But they try to blame Stephen Harper for everything. That's the problem.

**Interjection:** John A. Macdonald.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John O'Toole:** You can't blame Robert Stanfield or Sir John A. Macdonald; all that has passed.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Order.

**Mr. John O'Toole:** What have you done to fix the problems in the last seven years? That's the question that people should be asking. How are you doing? I asked the families of Ontario in my riding of Durham, "How are you doing? Have you got a job? Is your electricity bill manageable, your gas for the car, your home? Registering your kids in hockey: Was that more expensive this year?" "Yes. Everything you're doing in Ontario now is more expensive." Why? Ask Dalton McGuinty.

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

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:** I just want to energetically respond to the member opposite because this legislation, I would suggest, is an example of how we are continuing to put in place the framework that people in Ontario need. As has already been said, we gave the Auditor General the authority to go in and shine a light on our hospitals to look at what was happening with lobbyists and consultants. Because we gave him that authority, we are now able to introduce this legislation to fix something that has been in place for many years.

But I also want to respond to something the opposition has talked about repeatedly, and that is the eHealth

situation. I want to address the issue of this initiative, because there is so much that has been done, and yet time and again eHealth is characterized as having been a waste of money.

Let me just talk about electronic medical records. In 2005-06, some 770,000 Ontarians had access to EMRs, as they're called. Now almost 4,000 physicians representing over 4.6 million Ontarians are using systems funded through the province's EMR adoption programs. That is a huge, huge increase. By March 2012, we expect that 10 million Ontarians will have access to EMRs. More than one million children have an electronic health record.

If we look at telemedicine, 102,000 remote medical consultations took place in telemedicine in 2009-10, 90% or 48,000 more than in 2008-09.

The exponential increase in the ability of people in remote communities to get services they have never had access to before, including people on the James Bay coast, is what the eHealth dollars bought. Far from being a waste of money, they have been an investment in better health care for people in this province.

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

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** I have a couple of minutes here to talk about the message that the member just gave to this House. If anybody listened to it over there, you would be appalled at the things that you've done.

You talk about accountability. I can still remember on television, that nice-looking fellow saying, "I will not raise your taxes." I hate to go back to that, but it's there; it's going to haunt you forever. That's accountability. When a person, when the leader of your party, gets on television and does an ad like that and says, "I will not raise your taxes"—and what's he done? We've got so many tax raises over here.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** Now the member across the way would like to speak, and she's had her chance to speak. Maybe she'd like another two minutes.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Let's give her unanimous consent for another two minutes.

**Mr. Bill Murdoch:** If that's what she wants to do.

You've got nothing but taxes being raised. That's all they've done over there. You want to talk about accountability, guys? Well, there's not much left in this government that we have right now.

They really don't care about rural Ontario. They bankrupted us. Then they turn around and raise taxes again.

I hate to see what the next one's going to be because I don't think they're done yet. They still have a year to survive, if they can survive.

What did we have, a \$20-billion deficit last time? The biggest deficit ever, that's pretty bad. You start talking about accountability. There isn't any accountability left over there. It's really unfortunate.

The member just brought that all out. I hope they listened, and maybe there's a chance for them to change, but I don't see much change coming for the next year.

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I was able to listen to my Conservative colleague's speech, at least some of it. While I don't agree with him on some of the things he said, one of the areas that he touches on that I think all of us need to be aware of is the fact that in communities where people can't get a long-term-care bed for their mother or their father or their grandfather, where people are told they might be able to get an appointment with a family doctor four months from now, where people are being told that health services are being cut in their community, people are astounded to then learn that health care agencies like hospitals are spending in excess of \$100,000 a year on paid lobbyists, consultants.

Who, by and large, are these people? They're people who claim to have inside access to the government. Some of them are former staffers in the Premier's office. Some of them are former staffers in cabinet ministers' offices. I think the average person across Ontario would be astounded to hear this.

I think they would be equally astounded to know that it has been going on for seven years under this government, even as this government has announced and re-announced and re-announced legislation saying that this is not going to happen, or this is not allowed, or this is improper. I think that's what people find really, really astounding.

Frankly, there is no defence for it. There is no excuse for it. There's absolutely no excuse, for example, for the emergency room in a community to be cut at the same time \$100,000 is being spent on hiring paid lobbyists to lobby the cabinet minister.

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

1710

**Mr. Phil McNeely:** I just want to read some lines from the Office of the Auditor General's October 2010 report:

"More specifically, with respect to the ministry:

"Internal audit reported that for consulting services acquired during the 2008-09 fiscal year, many elements of the directive were being complied with, but there were still deficiencies that needed to be addressed.

"Our work indicated that the ministry was, for the most part, in compliance with the requirements of the revised directive that came into effect in July 2009."

We go back, and I think the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan said it very well. It was this government that shone the light into many of the agencies that were working as part of the broader public sector, and this has been reinforced as we move along. It takes some time for all of these different elements to be brought forward so that they are efficient and strong. I think that's what we're finding out, that the hospitals were generally doing a reasonable job, but they weren't following the rules properly.

The LHINs, which were formed three or four years ago, are doing an excellent job and are representing us in

our ridings, making decisions locally that used to be made in Toronto. The LHINs are doing well, but to have the expertise, especially when you get into IT work—I was really impressed with the work we're doing with IT.

IT Source is going to give the ministries, the hospitals, the LHINs and the universities that extra expertise that we need. IT Source did not exist a year ago. I was at the public accounts committee, and it came up. We have now the expertise on IT projects to make sure that they're properly set up in the beginning, that they're properly sourced—

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** I do appreciate the Minister of Transportation as well as the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their very supportive comments, the member for Kenora–Rainy River, of course, on long-term care, and the member from Ottawa–Orléans.

The key, really, here is that one issue was consistent across all the comments: Basically, it's the failure in the health care plan. Half the budget, basically, is in collapse. That's what this bill is about. It's trying to solve one of the holes in the Titanic here, which is the lobbyist part of it, and I think almost all members would agree with that. There had to be some action taken, regardless of the ideology that occurs here from time to time.

The Minister of Transportation is a very intelligent woman. Here's what I would say. She talked about eHealth. Actually, there are systems today that are running. Look at the Canada Health Infoway and the children's health network, which is also an electronic record for children already running. What's taken them seven years, and it's still not running for all the people all the time?

The telemedicine program was started by, I believe, Elizabeth Witmer when she was the Minister of Health. Look into the records. I know they haven't been here that long. Canada Health Infoway is a federal program to build infrastructure for the delivery of electronic health. It's a federally funded system. Why don't you jump on board with other provinces?

They seem to think they're the only ones with good ideas, and it turns out they don't have a lot of good ideas left.

I think using consultants in this province in an appropriate time and place for educating the public is a good idea. In fact, there can be experts brought in to help you solve problems. But this idea of using them to get to speak to the minister directly, jumping the queue, if you will, of other hospitals—set up a system where the access to funding is there, and set the rules for how you get it. This idea of paying your way to favour is what the people of Ontario are firmly against.

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

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** I'm happy to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 122. I want to start by talking about the deficit that the Liberals find themselves in. It's

a \$20-billion deficit. It's huge, much bigger than the one that Mr. Harris left in a good economy and much bigger than the one Bob Rae left in 1995—much, much bigger.

The Minister of Transportation says, “Yeah, but we have a recession.” I understand. We were there in 1990. I don't remember one generous Liberal saying, “Ah. But it's a recession.” Not one. But today, it's a recession. Yesterday, the NDP was in power. I just love it. Collective memory has a way of lapsing from time to time. “The only thing that matters is that we are in power now, and there is a recession.” A \$20-billion deficit is big. It's inconceivable to most. If we had hit a debt wall in 1995, poor wall in 2010. How is that wall bearing up? But it's okay; it's a recession. The Liberals say so. “Let's move on” might be the argument.

What happens when you have huge deficits? What happens when money doesn't flow as it normally does? What happens when certain parties that will remain nameless give away so much in corporate tax giveaways? It just means that the poor citizens have less than they did before.

What happens when some governments that will remain nameless give away income tax cuts because they deem them to be a good thing? A \$20-billion deficit; \$5.2 billion less for corporate taxes; \$1.2 billion less in income tax cuts that we so happily give away—and we have a \$20-billion deficit.

What happens in that kind of culture, member from Peterborough? We breed a culture for consultants. Why do we do that? Because there's need. When there is a need, people look for experts who can try to help them out. They go to the lobbyists, the consultants, because they might have a way in with governments. Of course, you're not affected by them, I know, because you're good Liberals and you transcend politics and influence. But when people are finding themselves in dire straits, they go to the people who have the knowledge and the connection to perhaps influence a Premier or a minister to deliver some crumbs their way. You've got to know it, Liberals, because in every sector imaginable, there are financial problems. Whether it's the Ministry of Health or education or social services, the needs are great. The money isn't flowing.

You remember, member from Peterborough, four years ago when I used to tease you about your words, “This is historic.” You guys don't say that anymore. But in the first couple of years, everything you did, however trivial, became an historical accomplishment by Liberals. But neither you nor any other Liberal member uses that word anymore. Nothing is historical anymore. It's hysterical but not historical.

People are worried. People are struggling to make ends meet. I have a feeling some of you know it, and those of you who are holding on for dear political life know it. The others, who are flippant, who are about to leave office in one year, are just clueless. You're not listening to the messages from your constituents who are telling you how much they are hurting—and they are. People are losing good-paying jobs. People are not

earning as much as they used to. People earn less today than they did in 1980. It seems to you unthinkable or unimaginable or intellectually not correct, but economists say they're earning less today than they were in the 1980s.

Immigrants used to do well in the 1970s and were able to buy homes. Today, they can't buy homes. Today they're rushing out of Toronto and going anywhere they can to be able to afford a home, because they can't afford one in Toronto anymore. It used to be a place of immigrants, but not anymore. It's now the well-to-do folks who come into my riding and most of Toronto, because it's only they who can afford it.

People for Education just put out a report saying that schools are fundraising more than ever, fundraising until they drop. Why? They're using that money for essentials such as computers, something that you would think should come from the Minister of Education. It's coming out of the People for Education, member from Peterborough. It's an objective organization, one that I know you like. They're saying that they'd rather do different things. They'd rather talk about how to help that poor child who's not getting the special education attention, how to create a stronger community, how to build a stronger community together, but they're too busy—not just baking cakes, as they did in the 1960s, but raising big bucks to pay for essential things in schools.

#### 1720

The United Way is raising \$115 million, \$120 million now. It used to be \$40 million. Every year, they ante it up because they need to raise more and more because they're getting less and less from governments. Little schools, charities, churches, synagogues and everywhere else are trying to appeal to the goodwill of people to raise more money because governments are not doing their fair share anymore. Why, with a \$20-billion deficit, what can you do, I suppose?

So we have created a culture of consultants and lobbyists. They're virtually the same thing, although “lobbyists” is a little more negative. “Consultants” is a little more positive in terms of the connotation attached to them, but they're essentially the same. But you understand, you are driving them to hire consultants. There are 4,500 non-profit organizations, many of which hire consultants. Why? They're strapped. They're strapped for cash. They can't do what you want them to do. For the last 15 years, they haven't been able to hire full-time people. They hire, if they can, only part-time people. Why do they hire consultants, you ask, when they have so little money? It's because they have little money, and it's because governments give them less and less every year. That's why they're doing it. That's the culture that you have created.

I know some of you are listening and some of you are not. I know that those of you who are not listening are not listening because you understand that you've got to pretend you're not hearing it. Hopefully, I can give you something to say in the two minutes you've got that you can latch on to so that you don't have to talk about any of the meaningful things that I am talking about. But those

of you who are listening intently understand the problem: that you have created a culture of need, a culture of finding people in the know, because they hopefully, desperately are looking to people who can give them the tools to raise a few more dollars. What a sad, sad story. What a fine, fine mess the Liberals have created for us.

The Auditor General does a report the same day the Liberals introduce a bill. "Oh, but we've known for a long time. Oh, but we were the ones who asked the auditor to do this report. We've got nothing to hide." The very same day, they've got a bill ready to present, to suggest, "We don't need to be told by the auditor. We already know. We're moving ahead of him." It's beautiful. It is beautiful to watch. Then, as my friend the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan was saying, "But we're only doing what the Auditor General is suggesting we do. Why would we do anything different or any more?" So when we attack him and his government for not closing any loopholes, he simply says, "Well, we're only doing what we were told to do," that is, that no one who earns 10 million bucks or gets 10 million bucks from the government can use those public dollars to hire consultants. Case closed. No more consultants; they're gone.

"Is there something else you could have done?"

"Well, no. The Auditor General didn't say we should do anything else."

"Oh, so the job is done?"

"Yes, the job is done. We did what the auditor said we would do. Now we've got transparency, accountability. We're done. We appeased and pleased the Auditor General. The job is done.

"Ah. You say, New Democrats, that you can use dollars that are not coming from government to be able to hire lobbyists? Okay. That might be true, but that's not the issue before us, because the Auditor General didn't say anything about that."

"Oh, I see. Okay. Well, then, we don't have to worry about it. If the Auditor General didn't say it, we don't have to worry about it. I see."

Your bill says, on page 3, as they define lobbyists, that it means "an individual who acts as a consultant lobbyist within the meaning of section 4 of the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, and does not include an in-house lobbyist within the meaning of section 5 or 6 of that act..."

"That's okay. It's not a big deal. If these MUSH sector entities have inside lobbyists, that's not a big deal. It's not a problem. We, in fact, say so in the bill. We exempt them. They can do what they like. That's okay. It's the other lobbyists, whoever the others are; those are the ones we're controlling, because those are the ones identified by the auditor, and we've got that under control."

"Oh, I see. So the job is done?"

"Yes."

"Okay, then."

I don't know. I think it's our job as opposition parties to say that institutions that are driven to lobby you feel the need that they have to do that. We, as New Demo-

crats, through our leader, Andrea Horwath, have asked you many, many questions, saying, "But how could underfunded universities use lobbyists, with public money or without public money?" Because if they use tuition fees to do the same, how could they be using money that is desperately needed by students to keep tuition fees down, as one example, or reduce class size, as another, or deal with a maintenance problem, as another? How and why would they use money that they do not have, that could be better used, for the purposes of paying good people who might be connected to you? But in the context of a \$20-billion deficit, you're not going to get anything out of it. Those universities and hospitals ought to know that in this kind of environment, you ain't gonna get too much more out of this stone that has no ability to bleed any longer.

So we say to hospitals and universities, stop spending money on lobbyists. There's no money to be gotten. You have been underfunded for many, many years, and you're going to continue to be underfunded for many years. The lobbying has got to be of a different kind, where citizens who feel and understand the problems that we are faced with engage you in a public debate and finally engage you next year, October 6, with a final vote as a way of determining whether they like you or do not like you. That's the power of the citizen, and that's the power of the vote. We don't need lobbyists. We don't. We really don't. We need citizens to be engaged and to ultimately tell you, or tell governments, whether they like you or not. I think that they will pass judgment on you on October 6, 2011, because your record so far is not that great, and 76% of the people in a poll responded that they would like to see another party in power. Yikes.

And you, member from Peterborough, can say, "Oh, the member of the third party has fundraisers and they invite the lobbyists and consultants." You can do that all you want. I just love to hear it.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** We'll remind you.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** It's not going to help you.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** It's not going to help you. But I'm not sure, because, you see, what people know is that the ones who are under influence, if any—it's not Marchese; it's Jeff from Peterborough. But more than Jeff from Peterborough, it's the ministers. They are the ones who have the public purse to determine whether or not monies could be given or not given. So when they go to Marchese, God bless. I'll take their money, honest to God. I want to invite—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Name them. Send me those names too. I'm going to ask the leader to send me those names, because I wouldn't mind raising a couple of bucks from them.

*Interjection.*

1730

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Jeff, I could see you like you were a fly in—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** I ask the member just to mention the riding name.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** The member from Peterborough is like a fly in that little you-know-what, right? It's good to see you that way. I wish you the best of luck; I do.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I wish you luck too.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Because you've got one more year.

Freedom of information: Finally, hospitals will be included in the FOI legislation, something New Democrats have tried to push for quite a long time. You wouldn't pay us any heed in the past, but finally you do.

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** So you agree with that.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** If we agreed with it in the past, why would we disagree in the present? It makes no sense.

Member from Peterborough, here's a little question I ask you. It will take 15 months before that part is enacted. By the way, conveniently, it's after the election. Is there a reason for that? All of a sudden, FOI is okay. You finally listened to the NDP. That's fine. We agree with you. No problemo. Why does it take 15 long months? Our election is but one year away. This measure, FOI, is a year and six months from now. Why?

Here's the why: You guys are worried. I understand you're worried; I do. And there's political quivering going on, right? Do you understand that, political quivering? You should, and you've got to protect yourself, defend yourself as best as you can.

This bill goes a little way toward addressing some of the issues that we have raised and some of the issues that the Auditor General raised. That's the Liberal way. You only go as far as you can or as you need to, just a little, tiny little bit, just to be able to say, "Yes, but we listened to the auditor. He told us what to do, and we did."

But God wouldn't want you to go too far. Oh, no. Because that would not be the Liberal way. We've got to hold God back on that one. You've got to wait, Lord, on that one.

So is it a bill that we can support? What are you going to do? Of course, I'm going to support this in the end. I just wanted you to know that there are some little problemos in the bill, and I wanted to point them out, just to inform you, if nothing else.

I'm looking forward to your comments.

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

**Mr. Bill Mauro:** I'm pleased to rise and make a couple of comments in response to the member from Trinity-Spadina, who spent a little bit of his time speaking about and implying that the reason that people were hiring lobbyists with hospital public money to come down to Queen's Park and lobby down here is because they were starved for cash. In 2003, the provincial health care budget was \$30 billion. Today it's \$45 billion, an increase of \$15 billion, a 50% increase.

Now, I suppose the contradiction or the criticism will be that you're not spending it well, but to imply that they're starved for cash when we've increased the budgets in the health care sector and in hospitals I think

by 40%, within the hospital sector, by \$40 billion there—it's a bit rich to suggest that they've been starved for cash.

It also implies that this has never happened before. He's also telling people following the debate on television that previous to this legislation people were not hiring lobbyists to come down here. They were hiring lobbyists when they were in government. They were hiring lobbyists when they were in government. They've been hiring lobbyists since we've been in government. We're stopping it now. You can say we're doing this as a result of the AG's report or not; it doesn't matter. We're stopping it. You didn't.

He talked about FOI. We're responding on the hospital sector. We're making the hospital sector subject to FOI, again because we're responding to whatever the AG had to say. The NDP have been asking for it for a long time. That's what he said: "We've been pushing for the FOI." You had five years: 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995—five years. They didn't do it. I don't know; there's a reason, I suppose.

On the consultants piece as well: \$650 million under the previous government down to \$350 million; we reduced the use of public expenditure on consultants by 50%—down by 50%.

So there's a little bit that we disagree with. That's not a surprise, I suppose. Nevertheless, I thought it important to make those points.

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

**Mr. John O'Toole:** The member from Trinity-Spadina is always informative and entertaining. I say that quite genuinely.

Now, I do take one small version here. He spoke rather critically of the member from Peterborough. I don't know whether it's justified or not, but I can just say that I was reading an article that the Peterborough Regional Health Centre submitted their budget to a meeting under the Central East Local Health Integration Network on October 27. Here's the interesting part: The deficit at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre is \$8.9 million. The decision made by the McGuinty-appointed LHIN is—now their deficit is \$17.8 million. That's the Peterborough hospital which went from \$8 million to \$17 million.

It goes on to say that the LHIN forced them to lay off staff, and now they're spending about \$9 million in severance to nurses that could have gone for children with heart conditions or neurology conditions. They'll stand in the House—the member from Peterborough won't stand for them—and blame the hospital. That's what they'll do, or they'll blame the minister federally. Stand and deal with the issues. They're starting to come down around your ears.

The member from Peterborough didn't cause it, but he's not standing up for them, and neither are any of the Liberals standing up for their constituents, on energy or any issue. They're smiling and they're looking as if everything's going fine. Well, it's not, and this is one more example.

The use of lobbyists has gotten out of control. That's just one more thing. It's like a number of boards to build a house. Well, your house is coming down around your ears. Do you understand? Don't you get the message? Are you not reporting in the House what letters you're getting on energy bills from seniors or from a person who's on a ventilator who's now going to have to turn the ventilator off at night? It's—

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

**Hon. Madeleine Meilleur:** It gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today in support of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector.

Some of us here in the House would like us to send a little memo to these organizations that says, "No, don't do that again." But on this side of the House, we prefer to be more firm about it, so we've decided to propose a bill, Bill 122, that will prevent this from happening, not a little memo. We don't think a little memo will do.

The members from the NDP party—we don't know where they stand. Sometimes they say, "Yes, we're going to support it." They speak against it, but they say that they're going to support it.

I'm very proud to support it because I think that the Minister of Health has it right. The money that is sent to hospitals should be for health care. As all of you know, I'm a former nurse. In the hospitals, we need all the dollars for health care to make sure that our patients are well taken care of and that the doctors, the nurses and the health professionals have all the equipment they should have to make sure that our patients are well treated.

I support the Minister of Health. She's bringing good discipline. If, out there, they didn't know that they shouldn't use the hard-earned money of the taxpayers to pay for lobbyists, now they know; it's very clear. They have a piece of legislation—

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

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I listened intently to the speech from the member from Trinity–Spadina, and he had some good comments. This bill will make its way to committee. There will be public hearings, an opportunity for the public at large to come and make their viewpoint.

I was interested in hearing my friend from Durham. A wise man once observed that you should never let the facts get in the way of a good story, so he actually told a very good story. When it comes to PRHC in Peterborough, in terms of operating funding in the last six years, we've been in the top six in the province of Ontario. There are 159 hospitals in the province of Ontario. In terms of operating funding increases, we're in the top six, but he forgot to mention that factual part of the story.

He also forget to tell everybody here that PRHC has had a \$24-million sick leave deficit, one of the highest in the province of Ontario, and indeed, that is a management problem. That is not an operational funding problem; that is a management problem.

1740

If we're going to banter back and forth here in the Legislature, it's important that we put all the facts on the table. Severance settlements were part of the HIP plan, the hospital improvement plan, approved by the Central East LHIN. All the facts are on the table. The member from Durham referenced the story but he forgot to give the back half of the story that provided all the facts related to the hospital improvement plan.

This is a bill, a very important piece of legislation. We all recognize that lobbying has been going on in hospitals, community colleges, universities, for at least 30 years in the province of Ontario. This is the opportunity to stop this practice.

The member from Trinity–Spadina will agree with me—it will go to committee. There will be, I suspect, significant representations during the committee stage, and it's all in our own best interests, I believe, to get a good bill that respects taxpayers' dollars—

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

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** It is good that after seven long, painful years the Liberals finally introduced a bill that addresses the problem of lobbyists—

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** After they got caught.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** Why else would they respond? Because that's the only thing that Liberals do. They respond when there is pressure.

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** After they got caught.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese:** But they like to say, "No, no. We talked to the auditor. We knew there were problems and we told him to go look. That's why we did it." You do it because you're under tremendous political pressure. Questions were asked by our leader, Andrea Horwath, on a regular basis, and every time those questions came, you could see the ministers cowering, trying to skulk under the carpet. The problem is, you can't hide here; you can't hide here in the Legislature.

The problem is that whenever the economic times are bad, lobbyists will thrive, and they will continue to thrive. You've done nothing to eliminate them, and you've done actually very little to reduce their numbers, because when the economy is bad and they're starving for cash, contrary to what my friend from Thunder Bay–Atikokan was saying, when our health care is strapped for cash and our social services and education systems are strapped for cash, people are hungry to find a way to raise money. Lobbyists are here to stay.

We've got inside lobbyists—no problemo; you don't touch that. They're going to continue to thrive and do well and be well-paid, and they're going to be there for a long, long time. They're going to ride out this government and the recession, and there will be better days for them to make more and more money. This bill does a little bit to satisfy your desire to say, "We listened to the Auditor General." But there are so many loopholes. What are you going to do?

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

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** I'd like to join the debate for the few minutes that we have available. I'd like to add to the debate. I have enjoyed, as usual, the presentation on Bill 122 from our colleague on the other side from Trinity–Spadina.

The reason we are debating this bill is because it was this government that brought it to our attention, and we introduced this legislation. It was this government that introduced this legislation so we could debate it. I hear that it's good. I hear that the members are going to support it. It would be nice if every piece of legislation that is introduced in this House by all sides would welcome approval the same day. It would be very nice. But we have a process, and the process is that we come into the House and we debate it. I know how the House works. I used to be on that side as well. I used to practically say the very same things that I hear from some of the members on the other side.

When we deal in the public interest, I think we have to do the best that we can, regardless of where we're sitting. And if we truthfully believe that the time has come, as someone has been saying for the last seven, eight months—I believe he has been elected as mayor. I really don't remember his name, but he has been saying that the gravy train must stop. That's a nice cliché.

The reason why we are debating this particular law is because the person that we empowered to make a report said, "No, there are some problems. Government of the day, it's your responsibility to do something about it." So the government has introduced Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, and it does what the Auditor General said that we should be doing.

We didn't waste any time. It is the responsibility of the government to act when we see some problems or when some problems have been brought to our attention. It would be wonderful if everything the government did would be perfect, but the fact is that now we are dealing with this particular bill to rectify some of the problems, to look after the interests of the citizens, and we are acting.

So let's move the process along. Let's move it to committee, and let's see what else our own members who belong on the committee and the public will have to say about it.

The fact is that the government is taking action. The member says, "Why are you bringing it now?" If no one is aware of a problem that is existing, nothing would be done. Let's be honest about it. If no one brings it to our attention or to any member's attention, and then we get questions from the House—unless that happens, nothing happens. When that happens, it happens for a reason, and action is required. Action must be taken to correct it for the best interests of the people.

It doesn't happen just to us, today, as the Liberal government or the McGuinty government. It happened when I was in this House under the Conservative government and, I remember, under the NDP government. My goodness. We used to scream "murder" once.

There is a 17-storey building that went up in my area a few years ago when the New Democratic Party was in

power. We said, "How can you afford to buy a four-acre site for \$7 million when the market is commanding about \$200,000 an acre?" I wonder why. We brought it to the attention of the then government, the then minister, but you know what? The consultants, they were so many and so powerful and so well infiltrated that no matter what we said from that side of the House, the deal was made. No one was listening to the people, to the community.

Now we are acting on concerns that we have, that the opposition has and that the public has. It is incumbent upon every member of this House to say, "How soon can we do it, and if we do it, what happens?" If we move along and we approve—and I hope that this will move ahead, and one day we are going to approve it, sooner than later, let's say—what will this Bill 122 accomplish? It accomplishes a lot of the things that the opposition, especially the member from Trinity–Spadina, has been saying.

We have to stop it. We have to clean up lobbyists. We have some 259 Ontario classified agencies, like the big ones: the Liquor Control Board of Ontario, Cancer Care Ontario, the hydro entities, hospitals, school boards.

I have to tell you that my own hospital—and I don't fault the boards of the hospitals, the CEOs, because they are doing what they are allowed to do. Would they go and hire a consultant if, five years ago, there had been a law saying that you can't hire? I had a call from a consultant myself. I'm quite open about it, because it is something that is allowed at the present time. It was something that was allowed yesterday.

**1750**

I'm telling the hospital board and saying, "Why in the name of the good Lord did you go and hire a consultant when you have an elected member you should be using as your consultant?" They don't have to pay anything. But they do it. Why do they do it? Well, they all do it. Less expensive, more expensive: They all do it. They are friends; they are acquaintances. It is the custom.

The fact is that this government, like no other government, even at this particular time, has been engaged in controlling, if you will, the damages that we have received because of the economic situation. The government said, "We have to keep our people working."

If we look at the auto sector, which is, I would say, one of the biggest, if not the biggest, sources of employment that we have in Ontario, what would it mean for Canada as a whole, for Ontario as a whole, if we didn't take action and support the hundreds of thousands of employees who would have been out of work? We continue to create jobs on a daily basis with the actions of this government here—hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Are we concerned about the \$17 billion or \$18 billion or \$20 billion? Of course. But it's no different than anybody who is concerned with raising a family. They don't know if there is a part-time job available or if they're going to be getting a full-time job. They have to worry about how they're going to move along.

Our job today, as a government, is to keep Ontario working. As long as the people of Ontario have jobs, they

can afford to buy cars; they can afford to buy all kinds of equipment, furniture; they can take holidays; they can do all kinds of things. Plus, the government has a responsibility to build new schools, new hospitals. We are doing that. This is part of why, when things get tough, the government has to get tougher, and it has to keep on going because it has a responsibility.

I think we found complete acceptance within the House and out of the House when we said we have to look after our own kids, providing all-day kindergarten and stuff like that. That costs money: a billion dollars. But look what it does to millions of families throughout our province. It gives an opportunity to the kids to go to kindergarten all day long, and the freedom to those parents to operate in a much better, efficient way, to go to work and manage their social life. I think it's because of the actions of this government.

It's easy to hear the opposition say, "Well, you have a problem." It's not that we have a problem and we are not acting on it. And it's not that the problem was brought upon ourselves by ourselves. You have to look around. It's the economic situation. We have ups and downs. But the important thing is to look at our government, that it's able to face those difficulties when we have those ups and downs.

Things will get better, and the deficit will come down and the budget will be improved. But in the meantime, we have to keep our kids in schools, good schools. We have to provide good health care. Look at our seniors, for example. We have to provide for our seniors. What do we have to say about our seniors? I can't think of a time when seniors received more benefits from any other government than this particular government here. Are they being affected by some of the cost increases in utilities? Of course, they are being affected. But at the same time, the government recognizes that we need to do something for our seniors. Therefore, we are going to compensate them so they don't feel the pinch so much.

For our workers, I think we have increased the minimum wage seven or eight times since we've been in power. If you talk to some of the other provinces, they say, "Wow, you're doing good." We have to balance the people who provide the jobs and our workers because we have a responsibility to both. While the employers provide those jobs, we have to make sure that the jobs they provide are fair and just to the people who work for them.

I think my colleague wants a couple of minutes. I think I have used my time.

It's an important piece of legislation, and I think we have to look at it very realistically. I know it's difficult, because if the opposition doesn't try to look for the worst parts in a particular law, they feel that they are not doing their job. But I think the people who they represent are quite well educated, and I know that they will understand when they see us members saying—they may not be in government, but they are reasoning it out, and that's the way it should be. They should be supporting it, because this must end. This is the right way of doing it. I hope

that at the end, all the members of the House will be supporting Bill 122.

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

**Mr. Jeff Leal:** I always appreciate the important contributions that the member from York West makes to this assembly. Before he arrived here in 1995, he had a very long and distinguished career serving on Metro council. He's certainly a man of vast experience. His family came to this country and was able to prosper. It allowed the member from York West to serve in public life, and he does so very effectively.

In his comments today, he talked about helping seniors and working with his hospital in terms of Bill 122, making representations on behalf of his community. I believe they are getting a new hospital that will be under construction shortly. That's certainly significant in terms of his strong advocacy on behalf of his constituents in the wonderful riding of York West. He is an example of why we need to bring in this legislation. There is no need for lobbyists to make representations on behalf of their communities. They can go to individuals like the hard-working member from York West—and it's true of all 107 members in this House, who work very diligently, effectively and with great effort each and every day to represent their constituents on a variety of issues, be it in government, in opposition or being a member of the third party, doing what is expected of them by their residents.

The member from York West covered a lot of the activities that he's been involved with and provided some significant comment on Bill 122.

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

**Ms. Sylvia Jones:** I want to bring this debate back to Bill 122. Of course, this was introduced on October 20. The other interesting thing that happened on October 20 was the Auditor General's report. It was not a shining report if you were in government, shall we say. It was very clear that once again, the auditor had come forward with an excellent report with many concerns. Of course, most of those concerns we are trying to pretend don't exist or will all go away under the introduction of Bill 122.

**1800**

I would not want to mislead the people who are reading Hansard and the people who are viewing this debate that the genesis for Bill 122 is very clearly the damning report that the auditor came forward with, talking about just how much use and abuse there has been with consultants by both hospitals and LHINs. Keep in mind that only three LHINs across the entire province were reviewed, and they all had issues.

Bill 122 is strictly trying to divert the discussion and the debate around what the auditor has already previously highlighted a year ago with eHealth and again on October 20 with Consultant Use in Selected Health Care Organizations. I would not want us to lose track of exactly what we are to be debating here this afternoon.

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

**Mr. Howard Hampton:** I listened with interest to the member from York West, and his speech leads me to ask a couple of questions. One would have thought, with the disclosure of the billion dollars squandered on eHealth and the fact that the Auditor General said that virtually nothing was produced, and then the pronouncements from the Premier that this was not going to happen again and this was not going to be allowed to happen again—one, I think, is surprised to find that this has been going on more than a year later and continues to go on. I think people would want to ask the member for York West, “Were those just empty words that the Premier pronounced over a year ago, that this is not going to be allowed and this is not going to happen anymore?”

The other thing I think people would want to ask is, why was this legislation produced only after the government got caught? As we all know, what the Auditor General does is he does his work, and then he goes to the government and says, “This is what I found. What’s your response going to be?” It was only after this government got caught that it brought out this legislation.

But the third question I think somebody would want to ask—the government is now saying, “Oh, this is urgent that we address this.” If the government feels it is urgent to address this, why is it that the bill really doesn’t take effect until January 2012, after the next election? If it was really urgent on the government’s part to deal with this, shouldn’t it be taking effect now, as soon as the legislation is debated and presumably passed? Why is it going to take until after the next election, January 2012—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Thank you. Questions and comments.

**Mr. Reza Moridi:** It’s my pleasure to rise in this House and speak to Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. The fact of the matter is that over 13 years of NDP and Conservative rule, consultants offered services to various government agencies. It was this government and this Premier that allowed, basically, the Auditor General to review government agencies. The

Auditor General came up with recommendations, and based on the recommendations of the Auditor General, we came up with this accountability act.

This accountability act has several elements to it. One of those elements is the prohibition of the use of consultants by various government agencies, departments and so on and so forth. In Ontario, there are 259 classified agencies, such as hydro, utilities, hospitals, universities, cancer care and various other categories. The use of services of consultants in these agencies, the ones that are getting more than \$10 million in government funding, is prohibited based on this legislation, this bill.

Also, this bill provides some provisions for the CEOs and executives of these agencies to post their expenses on their websites. There are various elements in this legislation for accountability of the broader public service.

These are the things which this government and this minister have brought to this Legislature which we didn’t have in the past 13 years when the Conservatives and the NDP were ruling this province. We are so proud that our government and this minister have brought this legislation into the House, and hopefully it will pass—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** Thank you. The member from York West has up to two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Mario Sergio:** I want to thank all the members. It’s past 6 o’clock. I think it’s time to go.

I hear loud and clear the message that comes from the other side. Let me say that we are as anxious as they are to see this bill move ahead. If you will, let’s stop the gravy train here as well. Let’s bring this bill to the attention of the general public to bring some comments, and hopefully we can address it more fully when the bill comes back to the House.

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo):** It being past 6 o’clock, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 in the morning.

*The House adjourned at 1806.*

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