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Monday 22 November 2010

Lundi 22 novembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 22 November 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 22 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

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It's a pleasure for me today to welcome to the Legislature a number of members of the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance and to remind members that they have some lovely poinsettias and some great veggies, and that you should all check with your whip's office and pick up the card and see them in room 2 between 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 pm to pick up your goodies.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I too want to welcome the members from TOGA, the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, who are here today to update us on the state of the greenhouse industry and to share their holiday cheer.

It comes with a tag with the member's name on it to get those. I hope that all members will join TOGA for their lunch reception immediately following question period in committee room 2, and again, to come back down to the meeting and pick up their poinsettias from the greenhouse industry.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Today is Hamilton Day at Queen's Park, and I'd like to welcome all guests today who are from Hamilton, specifically the former MPP from Hamilton Judy Marsales, who is here with us today and who initiated Hamilton Day.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to welcome several guests to Queen's Park today: Mr. Barry Katsof of the paroxysmal nocturnal hemoglobinuria, or PNH, association; Hillary Handley, who also suffers from PNH; and her husband, Mr. John Girard. They're here to support Lucas Macieszka, who is awaiting life-saving treatment for his PNH.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: On behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I'd like to welcome all those here to Queen's Park for National Housing Day. Thank you for the important work you do to lift people out of poverty through affordable housing.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature today page Sarah Charnock's guests: her mother, Christine Charnock; grandmother Nellie Thalmann; aunt and uncle Marlene and James Morrell; uncle Mike Speckert; cousin Aeden Morrell; and friend Bonnie Irwin. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I would like to invite all my colleagues to Lebanese Independence Day. We're going to have a reception in rooms 228 and 230. Everybody is welcome. We have a lot of Lebanese food and sweets.

Also, we have a special guest with us for whoever loves and supports and is a Maple Leafs fan: Nazem Kadri is coming here. He needs your support; he's playing tonight. Thank you. I would like to see every one of you here this afternoon.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to introduce, in the members' gallery west, on behalf of page Drew Brennan, his father, Jay Brennan, who is a councillor in Smiths Falls—he was elected this fall—his stepmother, Jackie Kearney, and his grandmother Joyce Brennan. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: They're not yet here, but I want to take a minute to introduce the Mohawk College Jazz Band and members of the Hamilton Philharmonic, both of which will be entertaining us later during Hamilton Day.

Mr. Frank Klees: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today Father Geoffrey Korz, parish priest of All Saints of North America Orthodox Church in Hamilton, his daughter, Miss Sophia Korz, and parishioners Ms. Danusia Husak, Mr. Lukian Husak and Mr. Zakhar Husak. Welcome to the Legislature.

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

I too would like to take the opportunity to welcome Judy Marsales, the former member from Hamilton West in the 35th Parliament, to the members' east gallery. Welcome back to the Legislature, Judy.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery today, I would like to welcome Reverend John Hartley, Barb Hartley, Joe Isgro, Tiz Isgro, Tony Sobczak, Diane Murphy, Grant Hall, my brother, Joe Peters, and my niece, former page Olivia Peters. Welcome to the Legislature today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Acting Premier: Acting Premier, your government is in full scramble mode. It's hard to keep track each day with the changing policies you have when it comes to energy or taxing.

Let me follow up here. Ontario families are paying a billion dollars a year in debt retirement charges on their

hydro bills. For some reason that you have not explained, you've postponed the time that expires until 2015. Your so-called Ontario clean energy benefit announced in last Thursday's economic statement will cost the same: a billion dollars a year. So let me get this straight: You're making Ontario families pay a billion dollars a year more for the debt retirement charge so you can take credit for handing them a billion dollars a year for your OCEB. Minister, are you trying to confuse Ontario families, or should the right name for your credit be the "only cooked up for the election boondoggle"?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Just to try to bring a little bit of—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I've got today's Ottawa Citizen—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. The member from Nepean—Carleton.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think the member opposite counts her chickens before the eggs have hatched.

First of all, the Leader of the Opposition was part of a government that brought in the debt retirement charge. So every time you pay that—and he brought it in because they wanted to saddle consumers with the hydro debt so they could sell the assets to the private sector. Ontarians don't want to go back to that.

Then, for the first four years they had that fee on, not only did they not use the money to pay down the hydro debt; they used the money to pay off their own hidden deficit on hydro. I believe strongly the people of Ontario don't want to go back to that—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister continues his campaign to try to confuse Ontario families by talking about an entirely different part of the debt. You know you've collected \$7.8 billion that should have gone to retire the residual stranded debt. Instead of doing that, you've come up with your "only cooked up for the election boondoggle," your so-called 10% rebate, while you announced the next day that bills are going to go up by some 46% more.

Families are simply not buying that, I say to the Acting Premier. But that's exactly what the campaign to confuse Ontario families told you to do on page 2 of their strategy document that is circulating among a coalition of special interests who are dependent on massive subsidies for your green energy experiments. So you push back the retirement of the debt until 2015 so you can collect a billion dollars a year more just so you can hand it out and try to take credit for your OCEB. Do you really believe families think that's just a coincidence?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontario families and ratepayers know that the McGuinty government has their best interests at heart. That overblown rhetoric that's designed to confuse people and the issues simply evades factual interpretation. If the member had actually looked at the documents, he would see that we are continuing to pay down the stranded debt. The reason for that \$7.8-

billion number—I will refer him to Hansard for last week; I gave him the answer to that. What Ontario ratepayers know is that that member and his party left this province on its knees in 2003. They left it on its knees because they charged ratepayers for four years without using the money to pay off the hydro debt. We're doing that. We're giving rate relief to all Ontarians. It's about building a newer, cleaner, greener energy system for future—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, you're accelerating a hydro crisis. Your HST tax grab has brought Ontario families to their knees, and now you're picking their pockets while you're at it. You know what that Sussex document said, the coalition of special interests benefiting from massive subsidies to your green energy experiments. You know as well that for some reason you've pushed off the down payment on the residual stranded debt till 2015. You have enough money to pay that down in 2010.

Let's get this straight: You're adding five more years for debt retirement charges on the backs of Ontario families and then you're claiming this OCEB for five years, to try to confuse people and take some credit. The facts, Minister, are so obvious, even your campaign to confuse Ontario families simply won't work. What makes you think you can pull the wool over the eyes of Ontario families who are—

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

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The only thing Ontarians are confused about is what he's going to do about the electricity system; we haven't heard a word. I take it to mean then that the Conservatives will vote against the Ontario clean energy benefit. They've said it today: They'll vote against that. And that shouldn't surprise us, because instead of taking all that money from the debt retirement charge and paying it off, the debt went up in the first four years of that charge. People understand that. Every year it's come down a billion dollars on this government's watch. It will be defeated by 2016-18, which is ahead of the schedule laid out by that government. Let's make sure we have all the facts on the table.

They'll also understand about what was left. They left a hidden debt. They buried it in the deficit. We eliminated that deficit, just like we're eliminating this one to create jobs and make a better province for our children and grandchildren.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier: Your government is in full scramble mode. You seem to be throwing up all kinds of Hail Mary passes, hoping to get one to land, but Ontario families are seeing through this.

Let me see if I can understand exactly what their latest position is. On February 24, 2009, the then energy minister, George Smitherman, said that your expensive green energy experiment would only add 1% to hydro bills.

Then, just two weeks ago, Premier McGuinty said they were adding 3% to hydro bills. But now your own words in the fall economic statement say they will be much, much more. I ask the minister, is this just incompetence? Is it an attempt to confuse Ontario families? How much exactly are you driving up costs to your expensive energy experiments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It is about a stronger electricity system for all Ontarians. It is about a clean energy system where we eliminate coal-fired generation. It is about investing in a much better transmission grid. It is about saving people money in the long term because we are confronting the challenges today. This government remains committed to working with all Ontarians to rebuild the energy system, our electricity system; to make the kinds of investments that will ensure we never go back to the time that that government left us with where rates went up 30% in seven short months, where we had fears of brownouts and blackouts every summer, where the equivalent of Niagara Falls going dry came off the grid. Ontarians remember and they don't want to go back to that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Halton, your own leader wanted to ask a question, and you're shouting him down.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, in your fall economic statement, you finally admitted that 56% of the increases Ontario families pay for hydro are to cover the cost of your expensive energy experiments. This is very important, because only two weeks ago Premier McGuinty said it was 3%. It is important for people to have faith that the Premier will give them the direct goods, that he will be straight, that believing the word of the Premier is something families can do, but sadly, it seems to be quite opposite when it comes to Premier McGuinty.

I ask the minister, why did the Premier say two weeks ago that it was 3%, and now you're saying it's 56%? Why are you trying to confuse Ontario families about exactly how much you're driving up rates in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What Ontarians aren't confused about is that we need cleaner power. What they're not confused about is that we need a safer, more reliable grid. With the changes we've made, we're going to achieve that, and Ontarians understand the importance of that. It's important to the creation of jobs in Hamilton, St. Catharines and Windsor. It's important to giving our industries in Waterloo the sense that their system is reliable and will continue to be on.

That member may try to confuse the numbers, take things out of context, mix it up, but what Ontarians won't be confused by is the appalling record that that party left, the condition not only of our electricity system but of our entire ability to deliver that electricity under that member's party. We're building a cleaner, greener energy system, and we're helping Ontarians move forward as we

transition to that system. It's the right thing to do, and unlike you—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: What Ontario families desperately need from this government and this Premier is the truth. They need the facts. Your very own Premier two weeks ago said it would be a 3% increase, and now we've found out that it is much, much more.

But we understand why you're doing this. On page 2 in the strategy document from the coalition of special interests who are getting rich off the backs of massive subsidies from families' hydro bills, your goal is clear. You want to confuse families about the price we are paying for your expensive energy experiments. You've done this with the price of your Green Energy Act. You're doing it now with your debt retirement charge, postponing it until 2015 to stay on the bills. And you're doing it with your sudden backtracking when it comes to time-of-use smart meters.

Minister, why won't we actually get the straight facts? Why are you trying to confuse Ontario families each and every day when it comes to energy policy in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's all about clean energy for Ontario. It's all about a safer, more reliable grid. I remind the Leader of the Opposition of what he himself said on October 20 of this year. He said, "I think we paid a price for our energy policy in the previous government. Because we went and made a 180-degree turn." He's doing spins right now trying to make a coherent question.

The people of Ontario understand this: They will have a cleaner, more reliable energy system. They will have an energy system they can rely on. Their rates will go up, but we're helping them with that over the course of the next five years as we make the crucial investments that governments of all political stripes refused to make. It's the right policy. It's a clear policy. He can try to confuse it all he wants, but the people of Ontario are far too smart for that kind of game.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Last week, the McGuinty government announced a 46% increase in hydro bills over the next five years. They then introduced legislation to create a 10% hydro rebate over the same five years. But the devil is in the detail. Why does the legislation allow cabinet to kill or reduce the rebate at any time without any debate?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that in three short years the government she was part of raised hydro rates 40%. I think we need to have a full and candid discussion about all of these issues.

1050

We have created the Ontario clean energy benefit to assist Ontarians as we move forward to rebuild an electricity system that was neglected for far too long. We've chosen this change to help those people as we make the

investments in new transmission, transmission lines that will bring power to our bigger cities and new green energy opportunities on family farms and on the roofs of arenas throughout this province.

We've chosen to take this path because it's the right path. It will lead to a stronger, more reliable system and over time, to lower, more affordable energy prices for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government's bill states that the rebate will be available until 2015, but in section 2 it says that the government reserves the right to end it early by regulation, without any debate. Why is the McGuinty government giving itself the power to kill the rebate at any time without any debate?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the interest of complete accuracy, that's a relatively standard process in any government program, and the member opposite knows it.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They laugh.

What's important is that we have to make the investments in our energy system. We're putting windmills on farms, we're building solar installations throughout Ontario—we've come back from the brink. The government, in the choices it's made, has decided that we need a cleaner, more reliable energy system, and we're going to help consumers manage the cost of that as we move forward because that is absolutely the right thing to do.

It's about being candid with people. The member opposite would have people believe that she can lower energy prices; she can't. She won't acknowledge that; she won't acknowledge her own record. We're going to speak candidly with the people of Ontario—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If a future government wants families to keep receiving this rebate, they have to introduce new legislation, but if they want to kill it they can do it around a cabinet table without any debate in a single afternoon. Why would this government give itself the power to kill the rebate early without any debate unless, of course, they plan to do exactly that?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I take it to mean that that member and her party will now vote for the legislation because they support the clean energy benefit.

It's so typical of the NDP. They pretend that they're green one day and the next day they want to kill 50,000 green energy jobs. They speak against conservation. They're opposed to smart meters. They're opposed to closing coal plants. They offer no plan. They offer empty rhetoric. They exploit misunderstanding.

This government is about a clear and transparent debate about a better energy future with lower costs for Ontarians, so I'm glad to hear she supports the clean energy benefit. I know she will now vote for it because she knows, as we know, that it's the right thing to do as we rebuild our energy system in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to remind a number of honourable members of the import-

ance of being able to hear both the question and the answer. The occasional interjection is often very good for this place, but constant interjections are not helpful to any member in the House, and I would ask each member to act accordingly.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. The proposed bill of which I was just speaking also gives cabinet the power to lower the rebate without any debate. Why would this government give itself the power to lower the rebate at any time without any debate unless this is another promise that they intend on breaking?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, I can see now that the NDP will be voting in favour of the benefit, and they acknowledge it. That's why we're moving forward with this, because I think the leader understands that this is, in fact, the right policy to pursue.

This is about building a clean, green energy system. It's about more conservation, it's about less emissions from coal and it's about helping Ontarians with the price of electricity as we move forward. These are the right choices to make.

I'm glad the leader of the third party supports the Ontario clean energy benefit. I will remind her that it goes beyond what she has asked us to do. We look forward to working with all Ontarians as we rebuild our energy sector and, at the same time, provide ratepayers with a bit of relief over the next five years to help them as we make those crucial investments in a brighter future for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families have heard promises of relief from this government before. In 2003, the Premier promised that hydro rates would be frozen for three years. Weeks after his election, he raised them. That same year, he promised he wouldn't raise taxes. Months later, he brought in a regressive health tax. Now the Premier is telling families that he has another plan to help out. Why should anybody believe him now?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The honest debate that Ontarians need to engage in around electricity pricing has to happen. The member opposite may not want to say what she would do. She may not want to acknowledge the mess our electricity system has been left in by governments of all parties. She may not want to acknowledge that there was enormous support for taking the price cap off when we did because Ontarians understood that they were paying for it in their taxes—and it was hidden—to the tune of \$1.5 billion over 18 months.

We need to have an honest, open and candid debate. I challenge that member to say what she would do to conserve energy, to clean the air up and to help consumers with their electricity bills as we move forward.

This is about a better future for our children. I'm glad to hear they're supporting this choice that we made. The

clean energy benefit will help Ontarians over the next five years.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Struggling families facing hard times need real help, not a promise that only lasts until the votes are counted. The same government that promised no new taxes, frozen hydro rates and honest government has instead delivered unfair taxes, sky-high hydro rates and a string of broken promises. Now they're asking people to trust them again. Does the minister actually believe Ontarians will fall for this latest McGuinty government bait and switch?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Coming from a party that said that collective agreements were sacrosanct, then opened them and stripped them, it's just a little bit rich. Coming from a party that supported public auto insurance and then, when given the chance to do it, said that they couldn't do it; coming from a party that raised the sales tax, raised income taxes, it's just a little bit rich.

I challenge that member to move off the empty rhetoric and start telling Ontarians what they'll do to ensure that we have a cleaner environment, what they'll do to make sure that we have the wires—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: The only rhetoric is coming from you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, the rhetoric is coming from you, and a few others.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've laid out a very clear plan that will get us clean energy, a safer and more reliable system and will help consumers with their bills over the next five years as we transition.

It's about more jobs, it's about a better economy, and it's about an open and honest debate, where all of us in this Legislature acknowledge once and for all that we have to be honest about the price of—

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

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Health. On Friday, I learned that Lucas Maciesza, a 26-year-old Wellington county resident, was dying in hospital for lack of a life-saving medication approved by Health Canada, but not yet covered by Ontario's drug benefit program. Lucas suffers from PNH, a rare blood disease that is life-threatening. His doctors tell us that a new drug called Soliris is the cure he needs.

Last night, Lucas's father asked me to read a statement in this House to inform MPPs of Lucas's situation. I'm going to ask a page to deliver the whole statement to the minister. Lucas's father writes, "We request that immediate action be taken by the government of Ontario and Soliris be approved for Lucas and all who are suffering with this disease." When will the minister take that step to save Lucas's life?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for raising this issue in this Legislature. This is an issue that cuts across party lines. I want to say thank you to the member from Perth-Wellington and thank you to the member from St. Paul's, who have made sure that I understand the issue around this drug.

1100

What I can tell you is that we make decisions on what drugs are covered and what drugs are not covered based on evidence. It was our government that actually took these decisions out of the hands of politicians and put them where they belong: in the hands of the experts. I have asked the ministry to review as quickly as possible the evidence to ensure that people who could benefit from this drug do gain access.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? Member from Whitby-Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It is important to note that this drug has been approved by Health Canada for two years now. I think the minister understands that this is a life-and-death situation, quite literally, and I would urge her to get on with taking the proper steps to make this treatment available so that this young man can carry on.

You did promise that Ontario families would get health care where they need it, when they need it, and this is a clear example of some people being able to get treatments in hospitals where they live, while others are left out in the cold. Minister, can you please tell us what you specifically intend to do to deal with this situation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Ontario's expert advisory panel, the Committee to Evaluate Drugs, has reviewed this drug on two separate occasions. At their most recent review, they recommended that Soliris not be funded under the Ontario public drug benefit program for the general treatment of PNH. However, the CED also advised that there may be a small subset of patients for whom Soliris may be effective. They are now reviewing that evidence.

It's very important to note that approval from Health Canada does not address the issue of efficacy of the drug; they look at the safety of the drug. There are many, many drugs that Health Canada approves that are not on the drug formulary here in Ontario and in other provinces.

LAND REGISTRATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Finance: Buried deep in the fine print of your economic outlook released last Thursday were a few scant details of a 50-year extension of the government's contract with Teranet. The last thing Ontario needs right now is a 407-type fire sale when it comes to this very important public asset. Will this government release the renegotiated Teranet contract with all the detailed schedules? Yes or no?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are happy to extend the agreement with Teranet that was created by the New Democratic Party. It proved to be a wise investment by the government of the day. The Conservatives indeed also extended that by taking this step. We're ensuring the

quality service that has been offered. We'll continue to do that. It's paying us \$1 billion up front.

We also, by the way, control the fees, and those will be held at one half of the consumer price index. We also will get royalty payments of \$50 million a year, plus we've used the money to pay down Ontario's debt. That yields another \$50 million.

I applaud the government of the day, the New Democratic Party government, for creating this situation. I'm glad we're able to extend it in a way that benefits all Ontario taxpayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As much as I always appreciate praise from the Minister of Finance, I actually had asked him a question. Will he release the detailed agreement, the schedules, so that the people of Ontario can see what's going on? Will he, in fact, let people have that information? Can you give us the answer, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's all in the budget. The terms of the agreement are there—how prices are going to be managed over the next 50 years, how much we received in exchange, how much we're going to get in royalty payments and the approximate amount of interest that we'll get. That's approximate because, as the member well knows, interest rates vary over time.

This is the right deal. When the government of the day first made this move, it turned out to be a good investment. The previous Conservative government as well extended the lease and that turned out to be a good decision. This builds on those good decisions. I welcome the member's question and just refer him to the budget documents.

TAXATION

Mr. Ted McMeekin: My question to the Minister of Revenue is about helping families. Last week, the Minister of Finance delivered the government's fall economic update. There was a great deal of information in that update, including information about Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth. It included information on the government's plan for economic recovery and for making Ontario stronger. But what it didn't include was any reference to removing the HST off of hydro, something I know the third party has been keen to see happen. Minister, let me ask you straight up, can you explain why the government has not taken the HST off of hydro bills?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to thank the honourable member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale for this very important question. He's a great advocate for our community.

The HST is part of a full tax package for our province. Firstly, I would like to highlight that we as a government have done more than what the NDP has asked for. People in Ontario are asking for help during lean times. We've listened, and that's what we're providing. While we make needed and unavoidable investments in the province's electricity system, we have proposed to provide a benefit of 10%. Our 10% goes above and beyond what the NDP was asking for. The HST is an important part of

our government's plan for economic recovery. Not only have we provided the benefit, but we have also introduced the most comprehensive tax—

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

Mr. Ted McMeekin: To add to my previous question, I'm hearing time and time again about how costs keep rising in my riding. Many constituents are attributing that to the HST, I think. Constituents have been contacting my office in Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale and asking me why prices on services and costs keep going up. Some of my constituents have asked me why the government has increased taxes on every good and service that is sold in the province.

Today is Hamilton Day, and the good people of Hamilton would like the minister to explain exactly what the government is doing to help families in my riding and the greater community of Hamilton.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Again it's a very important question. Our province now has a tax package that works for families. There's so much information out there, and I would encourage all members of this Legislature to set the record straight when it comes to our reforms. Your constituents, Hamiltonians and all Ontarians, know that 83% of the things that they purchase have not changed under the HST. This includes things like children's clothing, children's footwear, prescription medication, child care, car seats, diapers, books, foods under \$4 and newspapers, just to name some. Recognizing that some things have changed, we have provided \$12 billion in rebates, benefits and transitional support to Ontario families to help manage the transition and to make their life easier. It's also about creating 600,000 more jobs in the next 10 years. That's what our tax plan is all about.

SMART METERS

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Acting Premier. McGuinty Liberals are in full scramble mode when it comes to the energy file. The Premier thinks he is more intelligent and understanding than Ontario families, which is why he is forcing them to use the time-of-use meters. But now he's backtracking on time-of-use peak power, just in time for the election—too little, too late and too cynical. Ontario families will still have to pay for the expensive power this winter when the children are coming home from school and dinner is being prepared. Have you got any concern about that? Acting Premier, why would Ontario families have confidence in you when you keep changing it and making it up as you go?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Energy will have more to say about a range of energy issues tomorrow. But we disagree completely with that member and his party. Time-of-use metering is absolutely a top-notch conservation tool that families can use to help save on their energy bills. We have seen right here in Ontario, in the city of Woodstock for many years, a pilot project in place that saved those ratepayers almost 25% per year.

Jurisdictions across North America and around the world are moving to smart meters. Not only do they give

individual consumers the ability to manage their energy bills better; they also provide system savings overall.

1110

I'd remind the member opposite that with the condition our wires are in, we lose 15% just in moving power across them. We're trying to correct that and make a better system that allows people to save on their bills and is a smarter grid for—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The Ontario PCs and our leader, Tim Hudak, have been clear that Ontario families work hard but cannot keep up with skyrocketing hydro bills.

We've been clear, but the McGuinty Liberals have been scrambling. You've been backtracking on the impact of skyrocketing rates. You backtracked on the Oakville project that you said was absolutely necessary. You backtracked again on your time-of-use tax machines. With all of the backtracking, why would Ontario families trust anything you say on this or any file, especially just before an election?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: On the question of smart meters, I don't ask them to take my word for it. Let's see what others have 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," says Gord Miller, the Environmental Commissioner.

"With the new time-use-rate structure, all customers will pay closer to the actual cost for the power they use. On average, most farmers will pay ... less on time-of-use billing than they currently pay." That's from Don McCabe, of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

Even Tom Adams, who I know was a big promoter of your market deregulation scheme, says: "Ultimately, it's going to be a minor win for the consumer. On balance, I think the smart meter is the right thing to do." That's Tom Adams, energy consultant.

We disagree with them. We're proceeding with smart meters. We're proceeding with the smart grid for a better future for our children.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. À l'automne 2007, le commissaire aux services en français, M. François Boileau, a reçu une plainte du Centre de services de santé Peel et Halton. Suite à son étude de la plainte, dans son rapport appelé L'accès aux solutions, le commissaire a recommandé que le ministère reconnaisse sans équivoque sa responsabilité ultime envers les services de santé en français. Le commissaire a également recommandé que la ministre propose des modèles pratiques et concrets de prestation de services en français et qu'ils soient mis en oeuvre avant la fin de 2010.

Est-ce que la ministre va rencontrer la date butoir émise par le commissaire aux services en français?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's really important to me and to our government that people receive the very best health care that they possibly can, and that includes receiving health care in their language.

We've made significant investments to help health services be delivered in many languages. French, of course, is different because it is an official language of Canada, so we take special care to ensure that services are available in both official languages.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ces gens attendent depuis plus d'une décennie. Le commissaire aux services en français a été mis en place spécifiquement pour ce genre de dilemme. La plainte exprime une volonté claire de la communauté francophone de se doter de services en français, et la ministre, dans sa réponse au commissaire, s'est formellement engagée à y voir et à adopter des mesures concrètes.

Les directives du commissaire sont claires et sans équivoque. Nous sommes à 39 jours de la date butoir. Je crois sincèrement que les francophones ne comptent pas pour le gouvernement McGuinty. Sinon, comment expliquer le manque flagrant d'action? Comment est-ce que la ministre peut bafouer le commissaire aux services en français de la sorte?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite raises an important issue. I do recall one of my very first moments as Minister of Health. I was approached by the minister of francophone affairs, urging me to move forward on the creation of les entités, the francophone entities, to ensure that French-language services are offered. We did, in fact, make that change, and we are committed to reporting by the end of the year.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, we speak a lot about the importance of newcomers in this House. We know that the 120,000 people who come to Ontario every year come to make a better life for themselves and their families. When newcomers arrive in Ontario, they want to get started on making that contribution right away through meaningful work that values their skills and experience. This is why many of them depend on job training and certification programs—so they can get to work doing what they are good at. We know the important programs that exist, and are helping these people regularly to take advantage of them. As a result, we know these people are helping our communities grow and prosper.

Could the minister tell us how this government's plan has been helping these new Ontarians and what meaningful actions have been taken to ensure they have the necessary skills and qualifications to thrive in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I certainly thank the member for the question, and I want to say that this government understands that helping newcomers find work in their profession is the key to their success in Ontario.

We have a plan that's working, and we're getting results. We're breaking down the barriers for our new-

comers so that they can find work in their professions. For example, in 2006, we led the way with the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act and, today, we continue to lead the way with our successful bridge training programs.

These training programs are making a difference. They are helping thousands of newcomers get the Ontario training and experience that they need to get licensed and certified to work in their field. For example, since 2003, we've invested more than \$175 million to create over 200 different bridge training programs, and this has helped more than 40,000 newcomers find work in their profession. When our newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: But we know that there are newcomers working in jobs that do not match their education, experience and skills, because their preferred profession is one that requires precise credentials to ensure competency and public safety.

An example is that of foreign-trained pharmacists. There is no doubt that with the well-being and safety of families at stake, pharmacy is a profession for which we expect a high standard. These newcomer professionals almost certainly bring that knowledge, experience and expertise to the table, but often may find the difficulty lies in navigating the accreditation process more than any professional shortcomings. With pharmacists, a new entrant must first pass the Ontario College of Pharmacists' credentialing process in order to practise here.

The minister said in his previous answer that we are intent on removing barriers for newcomers to work in their chosen profession or trade. Could he share with the House, and our internationally trained pharmacists, what progress Ontario has made to help them get certified to practise in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I thank the member for the question. While there is still much more work for us to do, I can tell you that this government is making important progress. The McGuinty government's investments in bridge training for foreign-trained pharmacists is working. It's a program that I'm especially proud of. Because of this specific bridge training program, our foreign-trained pharmacists have improved their pharmacy licensing exam pass rates from only 20% to more than 90%. And of the 600 new pharmacists who are licensed each year, 400 of these 600 licences were issued to internationally trained pharmacists last year.

I'm also pleased to tell this House that the success of Ontario's pharmacist bridge training program has been recognized internationally. Ireland has recently created a pharmacist bridge training program modelled on Ontario's program. Because of these investments and our partnership with the Ontario College of Pharmacists, we're putting our newcomers to work—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, when will the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority brief the coalition of special interests you are working with to confuse Ontario families on the price they pay for Premier McGuinty's expensive energy experiments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The coalition of farmers who can now lease their land for windmills and still farm it—we work with them all the time. A coalition that includes environmentalists from all over Ontario praised the fact we've cut coal consumption as much as we have and that we're cleaning up our air. There is a range of people who support what we're doing, whether you talk about farmers, environmentalists or moms who have kids who use a puffer who want cleaner air.

We reject that party's approach to electricity. We are proceeding with clean, green, renewable power. We are shutting down coal. We are doing time-of-use meters because they give people the tools they need to save money on their electricity bills. Our coalition is consumers, farmers, environmentalists—

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

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Mr. John Yakabuski: Bullet one of page 7 of the Sussex Strategy documents for the coalition to confuse Ontario families says that the coalition of special interests will coordinate with the Ministry of Energy and the OPA.

Anyone needing further proof that you were in on the campaign to confuse Ontario families need look no further than the confidential government information that was printed in the campaign documents, privileged information like when the long-term energy plan is going to be put before cabinet and how much more Ontario families will pay for hydro after the next election. You refused to release it to the media and you refused to release it to this assembly when asked for it, but the campaign to confuse Ontario families—it was released to them.

How did confidential information pass from your hands into the hands of a coalition of special interests who are behind the campaign to confuse Ontario families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The only thing confusing is that member.

We're with farmers who want to have windmills and solar installations. We're with the towns of Tecumseh and LaSalle and Amherstburg that are putting solar installations on their roofs. We're with the farmers in Bruce county who want to sell power while they farm their fields. We're with the moms and dads who want cleaner air for their kids. We're with the 50,000 families who will have jobs as a result of our green energy policies.

We do have a coalition, and those special interests are moms and dads, farmers, environmentalists and Ontarians who want a job. That's our coalition. They'll vote for us. They'll reject going back to the old days of dirty

coal, big energy companies and private Tory backroom deals—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yelling doesn't make it better.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I agree with the member from Durham, who just commented that yelling does not make it better. Order, please.

New question.

SMART METERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Why are smart meters being installed in Windsor homes that are about to be demolished?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I just got my smart meter, and I know a number of my neighbours are—and unlike the Leader of the Opposition—and let me preface this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They laugh about it, but smart meters save people money. Smart meters save people money, and in order—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. I would like to hear the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: As the environment commissioner has said and as many other experts have said—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They do. We're going to proceed with them.

I'll give the supplementary to my colleague so that she can put some real light on what is obviously a question that's really torqued.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If nobody lives there, nobody's saving the money. This really does make it seem like they're not-so-smart meters after all. They were installed at homes to be demolished to make room for the planned Windsor-Essex Parkway.

The local utility actually blames the province for this stupidity. Their spokesperson says, "We are obliged by law to provide that service and at the present time part of providing that service is to install smart meters according to the provincial mandate."

Why does the province require smart meter installation in homes that are slated for demolition? How does that make any sense at all?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's very astute of the member opposite to realize that, actually, we don't need smart meters on houses that are going to be demolished. In fact, that's going to stop.

The reality is that there are about 400 homes that are going to be demolished as a result of building the Windsor-Essex Parkway, which is a huge infrastructure project. The homes that are going to be demolished need—

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When a house is going to be demolished, the heat and the services need to be kept in place until a couple of weeks before that is done. But the smart meters should have never been installed on those homes. That was a mistake. EnWin has been directed not to continue that practice.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, on Thursday, November 4, the Leader of the Opposition opened question period with a statement about Credit Valley Hospital that he knew to be inaccurate. Since then, the Leader of the Opposition has ordered other out-of-town Conservatives to repeat those remarks in this Legislature and in our local media.

Minister, you have clarified that patients are now and always have been treated with high-quality, hospital-clean, professional care in Mississauga's Credit Valley Hospital. The minister has been to Credit Valley Hospital, but the out-of-town Conservative critics have not.

Would the minister speak about the new hospital space plus the renovated space now under construction at Credit Valley Hospital? Will the minister give the people of Mississauga an update on the construction of A and H blocks?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks to the member from Mississauga-Streetsville for this question. I want to start by saying that our government will continue to stand behind our front-line health care workers, who provide excellent care in this province of Ontario, even though the opposition continues to make unfounded, irresponsible allegations without even talking to anybody there first.

However, our government was the first to recognize the special needs of hospitals in high-growth areas by providing specific growth funding above and beyond the base funding for these hospitals. We're also supporting the redevelopment and expansion of Credit Valley Hospital to support the region's growing population. This expansion will enhance the quality of life for families in Mississauga and the surrounding communities. We're putting in almost 80 new beds, more than 27,000 square feet of new space, 70,000 square feet of renovated space—

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: The high-growth Mississauga neighbourhoods of Churchill Meadows, Lisgar, Meadowvale, Streetsville, Erin Mills and Clarkson, among many

others, look forward to the opening of our new hospital wing next year, under budget and ahead of schedule.

Credit Valley and 17 other brand new hospitals built or under way since 2003 lie in stark contrast with the former Conservative government, which closed 28 hospitals during its term in office and left us a crumbling hospital infrastructure to clean up.

People in Mississauga are outraged at the baseless allegations made by out-of-town, out-of-touch and out-of-principles Conservatives about our hospital.

Would the minister update the House on the province's 10-year infrastructure plan to coordinate capital investments across Ontario? Will this plan recognize the importance of continuing to invest in health care infrastructure?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): If you want to raise a point of order at the end of question period, you're quite welcome to.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Improved hospital infrastructure is the legacy of ReNew Ontario, this province's first-ever comprehensive long-term infrastructure plan. We launched the five-year, \$30-billion ReNew Ontario plan in 2005 and completed it a full year early in 2009. Next year, we launch a new unprecedented 10-year infrastructure plan. Planning helps us build and improve hospitals and other health care infrastructure where it is most needed and where it will most improve the quality of care.

1130

Many health care sector representatives attended the series of seven infrastructure consultations we've held across the province over the past several months. They reiterated the importance of health care infrastructure sustainability. I can assure them, as well as the member and all Ontarians, that just as health care infrastructure was an important part of ReNew Ontario, it will—

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

ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Community Safety: During debate on the resolution calling for a review of the powers and authority of the OSPCA, the Legislature was presented with submissions from current and former OSPCA employees, inspection and enforcement officers, and current SPCA board members. Those submissions confirm that the OSPCA lacks the proper training, supervision and resources to carry out its mandated shelter services as well as its Criminal Code enforcement responsibilities, yet the government's direction to Liberal backbenchers was to ignore that evidence and to vote against that resolution.

How can this government justify blindly supporting the existing structure of the OSPCA—and knowing that it is incapable of carrying out its mandated responsibilities?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I would say it's exactly the same as it used to be when the Conservative government was in power, except that there is a strengthening of the laws that affect animal welfare in the province. You know that today the prospective agents, for instance, under the new training, would obtain a recent police clearance, provide a recent driver's licence abstract, pass a resumé screening process to ensure they meet the entry requirements, successfully complete a 40-hour online training course and pass a written exam prior to acceptance into the program. Once accepted into the program, all new agents are placed into the orientation phase of training, and all agents are subject to 15 days of classroom and hands-on training and a six-month on-the-job mentoring program where they are paired with senior—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister knows full well that by the evidence presented to this Legislature by existing and former officers charged with the responsibilities mandated by this legislation, that training is not being carried out; it is inadequate. The result is that the crown attorney, after reviewing all 43 charges laid by the OSPCA against the Toronto Humane Society, was forced to recommend to withdraw every single one of those charges, claiming that the investigation was botched. Why? Because the training is inadequate.

Liberal members of this House defeated the resolution that was to review the powers of the OSPCA to ensure that it could be properly resourced, properly trained to carry out those responsibilities.

I want to know from the minister, how long will this government ignore the clear evidence that the current structure of the OSPCA is inadequate to carry out its mandated responsibilities?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Day after day, members of your party get up and say that we shouldn't be increasing the public service, that we should not be putting more bureaucratic red tape in front of the people of the province of Ontario. What you are recommending, in fact, would involve the government of Ontario hiring new staff, the government of Ontario having more power to exercise, and a return to political decision-making as opposed to those who are non-political in the decision that they're making.

I want to indicate that there are even more things that have to happen now than when your government was in power. To move up, they have to, for instance, have four years of experience as a full-time agent, ensure all mandate requirements and re-certifications are complete and up to date, successfully—

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

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last Thursday, the people of Sudbury supported a sold-out fundraiser at the Caruso Club to raise money for a PET scanner for the Sudbury Regional Hospital. I thank the many volunteers for their hard work. It was a beautiful gala.

The people of northeastern Ontario have spoken: through 25,000 petitions, through support from our municipalities and from First Nations, and now through paying for the PET scanner from their own pockets. We want equitable access to this technology—that's all.

Why is the minister ignoring the needs of people in northeastern Ontario by refusing to support a PET scanner at Sudbury Regional Hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I certainly know that access to PET scanning is an important issue for all Ontarians. That's why we've made PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cardiac and cancer patients, where they've been proven to be clinically effective.

We will continue to evaluate, we will continue to fund this technology. Again, we turn to medical experts, people like Dr. Bill Evans and Terry Sullivan. We do have an Ontario PET steering committee.

More than 5,000 Ontario patients have received an Ontario-funded PET scan through the clinical trials process. We have the largest PET infrastructure in Canada. We have 10 PET scanners. It is important to note that there is no wait time for PET scanning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: There are 10 PET scanners. Some are in the northwest. All of the south is covered. The only region that doesn't have equitable access is the northeast. The minister is paying for PET scans presently being done in every region of Ontario, but not in the northeast.

There are naysayers out there who believe your government will continue to deny the people of northeastern Ontario access to PET scans even after we've purchased a PET scanner with our own money. They believe that the McGuinty government is so oblivious to the health care needs of the people of the northeast that we will be denied what every other hospital with a PET scanner is getting. What does the minister have to say to those naysayers?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have demonstrated our support for expanding our health infrastructure and health service in the north, including the northeast: a new medical school, a brand new hospital, family health teams and nurse practitioner-led clinics. We have the new NRRR program to encourage physicians to locate there.

But when it comes to PET scans, let me quote from André Marin, our Ombudsman. What André Marin says is, "I am gratified that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has taken my concerns about patient access to PET scanning in 2009 seriously and acted."

Dr. Christopher O'Brien, the president of the Ontario Association of Nuclear Medicine, says, "Today's an-

nouncement is a step in the right direction and will benefit cancer and cardiac patients who meet the clinically proven indications for PET scans."

This is a service that is provided to all Ontarians. As I said in my initial reply, there is no wait time now for PET scans.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Nickel Belt has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning health services in Peel and Halton. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(b), the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has notified the Clerk of his intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters. The order for second reading of Bill 135 may therefore not be called today.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

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

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2011, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Dated November 18, 2010.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have the pleasure of welcoming guests from Pleasantville Public School in Richmond Hill. It's my pleasure to welcome Diane Giangrande, Maria Lansing, Helen Bambrough, Dr. Lisa Walsh, Sacha Lund and Ethan Koloditzky. Please join me in welcoming them to the House today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Royal Ontario Museum for their creation of two accessible exhibits. Thanks to an anonymous donor, two accessible programs at the ROM have recently been unveiled. They are tactile tours, which can be touched for

people who are blind, and guided American Sign Language tours for individuals who are deaf.

During the tactile tour, trained museum staff will guide individuals and encourage them to touch their way through a selection of objects from the world cultures and natural history galleries. These tours are offered the third Thursday of every month. Print material is provided in Braille to enhance the experience for individuals who are blind.

Sign-language-interpreted tours are offered the first Thursday of every month. They are led by students from the sign language interpreter program at George Brown College's School of Deaf and Deafblind Studies. The ROM is even offering sign language podcasts and descriptive audio guides. This is a great step in the right direction to ensure that deaf-blind individuals have access to cultural activities offered by the ROM, and the best part is, there's no additional cost to these tours, as they are part of the general admission for the museum.

I'd like to thank the Royal Ontario Museum for enhancing our museum experience so that more visitors can take part in ROM programs.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted, honoured and privileged to welcome with us here in the east gallery members of the Ontario optometrists' association. They are coming here today to witness the democratic process take place on a regular basis in the House and also to ask everyone to attend their event. Their annual event is going to be held here at Queen's Park, in rooms 228 and 230. Everybody is welcome.

They come on a yearly basis to create awareness about how important it is for us to protect our eyes and to create some kind of prevention mechanism. They are here in big numbers today to educate us and also to lobby us to protect our eyes because, as you know, our eyes are important to all of us. Without our eyes, we cannot see. We cannot enter the life around us. We cannot sense the life around us.

I'm delighted in this House to know many of them on a yearly basis when they come here and come to my office and many other offices to educate us on a regular basis about the importance of the prevention they make and they do on a yearly basis, whether by attending this place or coming to our offices to make sure all Ontarians live a healthy life and a protected life.

Again, I wish them all the luck and success. I would invite all my colleagues to attend the reception in 228 and 230 later on this afternoon.

GERALD KEOUGH

Mr. John Yakubski: I rise today to pay respects to the late Gerald Keough, a resident of the town of Renfrew since 1951. Gerald held the distinction of being Canada's oldest active pilot, at 94 years of age, until he passed away this summer.

Gerald was born on August 18, 1916, the seventh of eight children, to proud Irish parents in Montreal. He was married in 1944 to Mary Lillian Wickham. Together they built a tightly knit family of 11 children, 17 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Mary predeceased him in 2003.

Professionally, Gerald worked for 40 years as an insurance agent in Renfrew. He was known as Honest Gerry to his clients, who trusted his wise guidance in making important life decisions.

His lifelong passion was born when he took his first flight in an airplane at age 11. He obtained his private pilot's licence in 1959 and became a charter member of the Champlain Flying Club. He incorporated flying into everything he did, even flying to his clients' homes to collect their premiums. He loved his plane, a small red-and-white Citabria with his initials, GPK, scrawled on the tail. After he retired, he used his plane to make social visits, never driving when he could fly.

The longevity of his love of flying was confirmed when he turned 80 and was inducted into the United Flying Octogenarians, aka the UFOs, an international flying club that requires its members to be at least that age and still flying solo.

A few years ago, I went to visit him at his home. It didn't take long to realize what a special person Gerald Keough was. The love and compassion he had for others and the kindness that emanated from him could not be denied. I will always remember the warmth of his personality.

Gerald was a committed Roman Catholic, calling his faith his "guide to right living" and his "key to heaven."

To the family and friends of Gerald Keough: He will be missed.

To Gerald: While your plane has been grounded, I am absolutely certain that you are now flying higher than you ever have before.

CITY OF HAMILTON

Mr. Paul Miller: Hamilton Day: Declaring that Hamilton is not a steel city anymore fails to respect and recognize our steel economic foundation, which should be protected and nurtured.

The Hamilton Day blitz five-point plan dismisses our once proud, viable steel economic engine. Mention of Stelco/US Steel and ArcelorMittal Dofasco ignores that there are enough steel orders for ArcelorMittal Dofasco to start up an old blast furnace and pick up lost orders from US Steel. Our steel plants can't even fill the domestic demand for steel. The only reason US Steel shut down was to break the backs of unions and get concessions from workers under the guise of a world recession.

Do we need better-educated workers? Obviously. But industries like steel need workers with job knowledge, skills and abilities that can only be gained through actually working in a plant. Combining on-the-job apprenticeship with coursework will make it better for em-

ployers and the employee, who will have a diploma and the confidence to better their career. Many already have the trade papers that are equal at least to a college diploma.

Hamilton is a transportation hub, perfect for an NHL franchise—a health care city. We have the infrastructure; we have the workers; we have the transportation grid.

Funding from this government—an increasing unemployment rate is likely a result of job losses, something which should have a significant part of any Hamilton Day lobbying effort.

PLEASANTVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today I am pleased to tell the members of this House about the 50th anniversary of Pleasantville Public School in my riding of Richmond Hill.

This is quite an accomplishment. On October 19, 1960, Pleasantville Public School opened its doors for the first time. Since that day, thousands of students have passed through its doors.

The school's motto, or touchstone, reads in part as follows: "We look beyond the ordinary to achieve the extraordinary." I can say, from personal experience, that this school, with its dedicated teachers, volunteers, parents and students has continually gone beyond the extraordinary in educating our young students.

Dr. Lisa Walsh, school principal, and Diane Giangrande, York Region District School Board trustee, are here with us today. Accompanying them are Helen Bambrough and Maria Lansing, both school council co-chairs. As well, two grade 5 students, Sacha Lund and Ethan Koloditzky, are here in the gallery.

I wish Pleasantville Public School another 50 years of great success in educating our young students. I offer my best wishes to Pleasantville Public School on this important anniversary.

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GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. John O'Toole: The residents of my riding are struggling to get back on their feet and find jobs, and they are finding the biggest obstacle in their marketplace is the McGuinty government. This government, the McGuinty government, has put the kibosh on job growth not just in Durham but directly in Clarington. In order to comply with the provincial growth plan, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing eliminated 155 hectares of developable employment lands from the Durham region's official plan. Mayor-elect Adrian Foster describes it in this way: "It looks like the province has decided Clarington is a bedroom community." We don't see it that way.

The devil is in the details here. The McGuinty government is not only standing in the way of job growth but is doing so in such a way so that Clarington has no way of appealing this decision. The final decision on this

job growth area was released on October 27, just two days after the municipal election; how treacherous. The appeal period is only 20 days, which means the newly elected council and Mayor-elect Adrian Foster will not meet until the deadline has passed. They will have no chance to appeal to the McGuinty government's unilateral elimination of these employment lands, a very important initiative.

I call on this government to give the new Clarington council an extension and the necessary time to assess and appeal the decision arbitrarily made by the McGuinty government.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: The McGuinty government has shown that it has both the leadership and the courage to make the difficult decisions that are needed to ensure that Ontario moves smartly into the future. We have modernized our tax system and made major investments to ensure Ontarians have a clean, modern and reliable electricity system that includes renewables and creates good jobs right here in our province. Examples include: Canadian Solar, 500 high-tech jobs in Guelph; Siemens, 900 jobs; WindTronics, 174 jobs in Windsor; and Lower Mattagami, 800 jobs in the Timmins-James Bay area.

The McGuinty government has listened to the concerns of my constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex who are worried about increasing electricity costs that are a result of much-needed investments in the electricity system. The new Ontario clean energy benefit is one of the many initiatives that we have already taken to respond to the needs of Ontarians and provide families with much-needed financial relief. The Ontario clean energy benefit will provide a 10% benefit to help consumers manage rising electricity prices for the next five years, which is the time that it will take for price increases to moderate. This relief will help more than four million residential consumers and over 400,000 small businesses, farms and other consumers who are feeling the pinch of rising costs.

Savings like the clean energy benefit are helping save—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Ottawa Centre.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: During the 2009 recession, Ontario's manufacturing and services sectors were among the hardest hit in Canada. It hasn't been easy for many families and for this province to struggle out of these difficult economic straits, which makes it all the more impressive, and makes me all the more happy, to see that Ontario, with the strong leadership of the McGuinty government, is now leading the pack on the road to recovery. We have regained 75% of the jobs that were lost.

We are not prepared to declare victory, as it is clear much more needs to be done, but we can and should be

proud of the strength of Ontario's recovery, which is due to the hard work of Ontario families. As families regain confidence to go out and spend again and more people are finding good jobs, we are beginning to see the positive impact on our finances.

Most recently, in last week's fall economic statement, we learned that our deficit this year will be \$1 billion less than in the budget projection and almost 25% less than was estimated and reported a year ago. This is a sign of our province's economic recovery but it will also help that recovery along. It is allowing this government to ease the burden of paying for hydro on Ontario families, and it is lessening the burden of repaying our province's debt in the long term.

I'm proud to be part of a government that makes the right investments to bring our province out of recession today and lay the groundwork for Ontario's continued growth in years to come.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thursday's fall economic statement reinforced that our government continues to provide important initiatives that make life a bit easier and more affordable for Ontario families and seniors. The McGuinty government is introducing the Ontario clean energy benefit, which will reduce the cost of electricity by 10%.

This initiative is just the latest of many designed to help make life more affordable. We cut income taxes for nine out of 10 taxpayers. We enhanced sales and property tax credits for low- to middle-income families and individuals. We introduced the northern energy tax credit and the seniors' property tax and energy credit. And, as the Leader of the Opposition frequently calls for, we are saving Ontarians money so that they have more cash to spend on their priorities.

But the Leader of the Opposition has voted against our tax cut for families, leaving everyday Ontarians questioning his commitment to helping the family budget.

Ontario has recovered 75% of the jobs lost during the recession, as opposed to 10% in the United States. The opposition don't want to admit that Ontario is leading Canada when it comes to economic recovery. Our government gets it and we will continue to provide strong leadership for Ontario.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SAFETY CAMERAS), 2010 LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (CAMÉRAS DE SÉCURITÉ)

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to safety cameras / Projet de loi 136, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les caméras de sécurité.

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. David Caplan: The bill authorizes the Minister of Transportation and municipal councils to require the use of safety cameras in construction zones and community safety zones.

Section 25.14.1 is added to the act to create an exemption from the demerit point system for persons who are convicted of an offence based upon safety camera evidence.

The bill amends subsections 214.1(1) and (2) of the act to provide that a highway or part of a highway may be designated as a community safety zone if the highway adjoins or is adjacent to land on which a school, schoolyard, daycare, seniors' residence, community centre or playground is located.

The bill changes all references to photo radar systems in the act to safety cameras.

I hope it receives the support of all members of this Legislature.

LABOUR STABILITY IN THE INDUSTRIES OF FILM, TELEVISION, RADIO AND NEW MEDIA ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA STABILITÉ DE LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE DANS LES INDUSTRIES DU FILM, DE LA TÉLÉVISION, DE LA RADIO ET DES NOUVEAUX MÉDIAS

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 137, An Act to regulate labour relations in the industries of film, television, radio and new media / Projet de loi 137, Loi réglementant les relations de travail dans les industries du film, de la télévision, de la radio et des nouveaux médias.

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. Peter Tabuns: The act is meant to take the existing labour agreements in the film and television industry that exist outside the Labour Relations Act and bring them into the act so they can make use of the mechanisms there for resolution of disputes. It is a labour stability bill.

PETITIONS

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

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 there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

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"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities and society; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-list, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of these expensive private therapies;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care Deborah Matthews to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment" where and when they need it immediately.

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents and present it to one of the pages, Kyle.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to read 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. I'm going to sign it and give it to Kira to be delivered to the table.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: A petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

"Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

"Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment."

EDUCATION FUNDING

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

“Whereas we are the parents, educators and friends of students in the Peel region public school system; and

“Whereas Peel students have historically received less funding per pupil per annum when compared to their peers in other district school boards and, in particular, have inadequate” special needs resources; and

“Whereas all students in Ontario are entitled to equal opportunities in education;

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

“To recognize and provide for the \$18-million learning opportunities grant retroactively owed to Peel students;

“Implement measures to ensure ongoing funding is based on current census data and other key demographic indicators of student needs to ensure that Peel students receive a fair share of provincial education funding.”

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Emily.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Val Thérèse, Val Caron and Chelmsford, three communities in Nickel Belt.

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Jake to bring it to the Clerk.

CEMETERIES

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a

mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario’s history; and

“Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario’s cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

“Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario’s greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

“Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

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

“The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development.”

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

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Frank Klees: This is a final submission of petitions delivered here by people from across the province who came to observe the debate on the OSPCA resolution this past Thursday. I will read this into the record, but the government has already ignored the thousands of petitions just like this by voting against that resolution.

The petition reads as follows:

“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 ... 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 ... 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'm pleased to affix my signature to this final submission. It's disappointing that the government, the Liberal members, chose to vote against—

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “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 agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to Breana to be delivered to the table.

RECYCLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is a petition I haven't read in a little while from the grade 7H students at Lisgar Middle School addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

“Whereas the grade 7H students of Lisgar Middle School believe that the current method of recycling used dry cell batteries and other household hazardous waste materials is not successful. We have attempted to create the easiest and most comprehensive method of recycling batteries and other household hazardous materials.... This initiative fits directly into the same frame of reference as the blue box recycling and composting programs, which have encouraged individuals and households to recycle as much as they already do ... ;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: ... to support, enthusiastically, the Recycling Raptors of grade 7H at Lisgar Middle School, in their proposal of a household red box recycling program, and ... to pass into law such a program, as described ... outlining the red box recycling initiative.”

It's a very interesting initiative. I and the member for Oakville have had a chance to visit the grade 7H students on two occasions, and I'm pleased to sign it and ask page William to carry it for me.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is 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 agree with this petition, and I affix my name to it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients ...

“Whereas since October 2009, insured PET scans have been performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask page Sarah to bring it to the clerks' table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WATER OPPORTUNITIES AND WATER CONSERVATION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT DES TECHNOLOGIES DE L'EAU ET LA CONSERVATION DE L'EAU

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 18, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other

matters / *Projet de loi 72, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur le développement des technologies de l'eau et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'eau et d'autres questions.*

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: As I was about to say just before we adjourned, today I will be talking about the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act.

I want to talk briefly about what the bill claims to do. I want to talk about the context within which this bill has been presented, the context within which Ontario is grappling with questions of water, and the performance of this government when it comes to environmental issues. Then I want to talk about the specific weaknesses and strengths of the bill and what I believe is needed to make it truly useful to the people of this province.

But before I get into that detail, I want to address comments made by the parliamentary assistant, the member for Oak Ridges–Markham, before we adjourned roughly 10 days ago. I appreciated her comments on the opening statements made by a variety of members. She was quite correct when she said that I approach these matters with a great deal of ambition.

I want to take—borrow—an analogy used by my colleague the member from Welland, Mr. Kormos, who talked about the difference between throwing a 50-foot line to someone who is 100 feet from shore and throwing a 100-foot line to someone who is 100 feet from shore. Both activities show some goodwill, but only one act will save that person from drowning. So I say to the Liberal government that, to the extent that you are only throwing a 50-foot line, you are not resolving the problems that have to be addressed.

There are times when one seeks balance in legislation—in fact, one seeks balance a great deal of the time—but there are also situations where one has an on/off switch: Something works or doesn't work. One has to understand when one encounters those situations, and one has to act appropriately.

I want to say to the parliamentary assistant that I thank her for the work she did prior to debate in committee, because there was great concern on the part of the NDP and there was great concern on the part of trade unions and environmental organizations about the potential for this bill to be used to privatize delivery of—provision of—public water services. The parliamentary assistant took time on weekends and in evenings to sort through that question, and she came forward with a wording that is incorporated in the bill: “For greater certainty, the purposes of this act do not include the privatization of publicly owned water, waste water and stormwater services.”

She and I had the opportunity outside this House to discuss that wording, and I initially thought that it was narrower than I wanted. But in fact, having gone through the dictionary and having asked the opinion of a lawyer who's done a fair amount of work in this area, the word “services” refers both to activities and to hard infrastructure. So, in fact, it is a fairly broad coverage of the issue.

The government, in adopting this particular clause, has made it very clear that this bill is not to be used for privatization. Any government, at any level, that attempts to use this bill for privatization of water, waste water or stormwater services will find that, legally, a judge would be able to see very clearly the intent of the government in this clause, and any judge who did not pick it up immediately I'm sure would be reminded by counsel that when they go through the text of the presentations by the government in committee, those here in the chamber, and commentary by the NDP, in fact publicly delivered and owned waste water, stormwater and drinking water systems are not to be privatized. That is a key point and one that can't be overemphasized, because, frankly, the privatization of water systems is not to the advantage of the environment or the economy of this province. I'm very pleased that that clause was inserted at the beginning of the bill and was written in a language that is extremely broad and catches a wide variety of ownership and operation situations.

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Having said all that, this bill claims to stimulate Ontario-based clean water industries by creating municipal demand for clean water technology and by supporting clean water technology development, which, frankly, is not a bad idea. We need a market for clean water technology. We face growing and substantial challenges when it comes to providing ourselves—our society—with clean, potable water.

The bill aims to reduce water use in Ontario. It sets what are called aspirational targets for water conservation—or it doesn't set them: It gives the minister authority to do that, and that, I will touch upon at greater length as we go through this bill. It enables the minister to require municipalities and public agencies to develop water sustainability plans and prescribe changes to plans if targets are not met. It revises the building code to include water conservation. It enables prescription of water efficiency standards for appliances and products. Those are all the stated goals of the bill before us. These are the claims that are made for what this bill will do for society. I use the word “claims” when I talk about this government's bill and when I talk about this government's efforts because, in fact, this Liberal government has underdelivered consistently on environmental bills and initiatives; underdelivered in a way that the people of Ontario should not have to deal with; underdelivers in areas where the people of Ontario deserve fair, energetic treatment.

I'll take a moment to read some excerpts from the testimony of the Canadian Environmental Law Association when it appeared before the committee to hear about this bill. Mr. Joseph Castrilli appeared on behalf of CELA, and in his comments to our standing committee he noted that “the authority to tie water-taking permits to water conservation plans for both the public and private sectors was already contained in 2007 amendments that created section 34.1 of the Ontario Water Resources Act.” In 2007, a few years ago, I was younger and the

world was a newer place. In 2007, there were steps taken to make sure that we had these standards. “However,” says Mr. Castrilli, “as members of the committee are aware, section 34.1 is still not in force.” It is 2010. We went through that debate. We went through that review of legislation in 2007. “Bill 72”—the one we’re debating today—“would authorize the province to require municipalities, by regulation, to prepare water conservation plans as part of their water sustainability plans, the latter also required by this bill. The province, in my respectful submission”—and he was quite respectful—“needs to explain how and when it will integrate the requirements of section 34.1 of the Ontario Water Resources Act with Bill 72 proposals and bring them both into force.”

The Canadian Environmental Law Association has done us a great service. They pointed out that strides have been taken in the past. Claims have been put forth on the public record. Voters have been told, “We are standing up for the environment and for water.” But in 2010, a number of years later, those initiatives that were so boldly proclaimed such a long time ago are not enforced. One has to ask: What is the fate of this bill? Will it be passed and then be allowed to clutter up some deputy minister’s office? Will it fill up a hard drive somewhere, requiring people to delete other files so they can make room for yet another range of promises? I don’t know the answer to that. But I do know that if, in fact, action was taken—if legislation was put forward in 2007 and not brought into service and not brought into effect even by now, then one has to assume that we’re not going at rocket speed to deal with our water conservation problems.

Mr. Castrilli had a few other comments. I won’t read them all, although, frankly, I thought he made a very good submission.

He focused briefly on the question of intra-basin transfers. What that means is that if you have a municipality somewhere between Lake Huron and Lake Erie, you can take water out of Lake Huron and discharge the waste water into Lake Huron. It’s an intra-basin transfer; it’s within the Great Lakes basin. The problem with that is that the more water you move out of an area, the less is available to provide the environmental support that is needed for the other parts of the Great Lakes. When you do that, you say to a municipality, “You don’t really need to conserve a lot. What you need is a very big pipe and some very powerful pumps.”

That failure to act is of great consequence to this bill. Will we in fact move ahead substantially and change the amount of water we consume, or will we have a very small act, a very small initiative, that will result in a few toilets being manufactured and a few faucets produced but not the reduction in water consumption that we actually need to engage in?

In the fact sheets that were provided in the briefing book that we were given—the MPPs who went to debate this bill in committee—there are a number of fact sheets about water consumption. In the UK and in Germany, the average use of water per person per day is half of what it is in Ontario. I’ve had the great good fortune to go to

both of those places. People seem to be well washed. They drink tap water regularly. They are able to clean their homes. Yet they have in place a goal that we would aspire to have, and that’s cutting water consumption per person per day in half.

One of the things that surprises me about this bill, or rather, this larger initiative within which the bill should be simply a piece, is that we in fact don’t have a target, a goal. When you want to do something—let’s say you want to cut the money that is given to children and youth services—you set a target, right? Then you cut. That is not a good thing, but that is a standard measurement practice.

When you want to do something good, it shouldn’t simply be a statement of an expression. One should have a larger plan within which this bill nestles as a tool, something that allows one to achieve that larger plan. That’s missing, and that’s of great concern to me and should be of great concern to anyone who wants to ensure that we in Ontario have good, clean drinking water available on demand when we need it. That’s a significant piece and a concern that I have with the way this whole project is being approached.

I want to note other elements—the government’s failure to deliver what the people of Ontario need environmentally—so that everyone who observes the passage of this bill, who observes the debate on this bill, understands the track record of this government of actually delivering or not delivering on the things that are vital to the long-term viability of this society and this economy.

According to the Environmental Commissioner’s report last December, the current actions of this government fall 30% short of achieving the greenhouse gas reductions that were promised for 2014 and 45% short of the greenhouse gas reductions promised by 2020.

Speaker, you get to sit in on a lot of debates, and you have, obviously, a great deal of patience and fortitude. You may well have heard me speak about this before—I don’t know—but you’re very discreet, and I appreciate that.

I had the opportunity in 2007 to attend the press conference given by the Premier on this matter, when he talked, in not quite Biblical terms but pretty substantial terms, about the need to move on this issue and to make sure that we protected the future for our children and our grandchildren. He used language that was emotionally powerful, he set out the scale of the problem in a way that no one could misunderstand and he made a commitment to move this province forward so that we would deal with this vital problem.

What do we find? That the government’s own plan admits it won’t meet the weak targets that were set, and yet very little is done to actually move us to where we need to be.

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I say to those who are watching this debate, I say to those who are listening to this debate, if you can’t move forward on something that you think is so fundamentally important to the future of this province, what hope is

there for a little water bill that you pass in the run-up to an election? What hope is there?

In this province, climate change is going to substantially affect the quality and quantity of water available to the people of Ontario. It will cause drought, and there will be farming areas where that drought will be of consequence in terms of crops produced. It will be of consequence in terms of the livelihood that people can make for themselves. It will be of consequence to our economic future, and yet this government does not even act to meet its own goals. If in fact at the much higher level we aren't making sure that our water supply in the natural world is protected, what hope is there for this bill?

When the Environmental Commissioner talked about the failures of the McGuinty government to meet its climate change targets, he made it very clear that action was needed to reduce emissions from transportation. He understood the consequences of not acting, the consequences in terms of infrastructure in our daily lives and the impact on the price of food.

Now, anyone in this chamber who works in the agricultural sector, who represents a riding with an agricultural sector, knows that it's critical to have the right amount of water at the right time. Too much—if you're talking about plowing and seeding, you can't do it. Too little, and it doesn't matter what you grow, you're not going to have a crop.

The Environmental Commissioner noted that one of the areas where in fact action wasn't taking place, where this government was falling down was in dealing with transportation. The government's response to not actually delivering the goods on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation was to cut \$4 billion from the Transit City project, to truncate that project. That will lead to delay and cancellation of long-awaited transit lines in the GTA. Truncating of a project that is badly needed to reduce congestion, smog, greenhouse gas emissions—this city and this province are poorer because of that decision.

This government is failing to stem urban sprawl. When I arrived in this chamber in 2006, we were debating the greater Golden Horseshoe smart growth plan. The plan that initially had been introduced was very extensive and had the aim of increasing the density in urban areas, reducing sprawl and reducing the spillover of urban development into greenfields.

The simple reality was that that bill, step by step, page by page, clause by clause, was pruned back until when it was finally introduced for third reading—commentators like the Pembina Institute and the Neptis Foundation, who had provided background information on the original bill, said simply that it was not clear that this bill would do any different than business-as-usual growth, business-as-usual sprawl, business-as-usual emissions and congestion. This government did not take the advice of those who understood what had to be done to deal with sprawl. Instead, it continues with highway expansion plans, continues with measures to get around the whole Places to Grow Act, and I cite the ministerial zoning

order for Bradford-West Gwillimbury. This government, understanding the consequences of inaction, having studied the issue to the point where it was able to present detailed legislation, still was not willing to act and do what was necessary.

When a problem as severe and as obvious as the sprawl in the GTA stares you in the face, when a problem as obvious as people sitting locked in traffic on the Don Valley, the QEW, the 401—take your pick. When a problem that obvious is not addressed by a government, what hope is there for this bill to conserve water? When it is that obvious, such that there is an anger in suburban GTA about the impasse that people face, what hope is there for this bill to deliver what has to be delivered?

You, Speaker, are well aware of the need to deal with transit, train service, and the need to have clean train service—electric trains—on the service that goes through a number of ridings in the west end and the northwest end of this region. But this government is not acting on what many people say is critical, and that is taking the very critical first big step to make sure that those trains are electric trains, not diesel trains. This government is continuing to allow sprawl to dominate southern Ontario, and it is committed to diesel trains when those diesel trains will lock us into a technology for the next 40 or 50 years that we need to get out of. What hope, when things are so clear, is there for substantial reduction in water consumption in Ontario?

Let's not forget that this government in the past has trumpeted its ability to take on the recycling issue, the waste management issue. This past summer it became clear that the government's waste reduction programs, the imposition of the new eco fees on the public, were not achieving the aims that were originally set out and, in fact, didn't do what people expected would happen: Industry responsible for creating hazardous waste would assume the cost and responsibility for dealing with those things. That's what needed to happen. Industry that was making a fortune from selling toxic products needed in fact to be held responsible for paying for disposal of those products.

What happened, and I'm sure you are well aware, is that the government allowed industry to pass those costs on to the public, creating a huge outcry. That is not atypical of this government's behaviour. We will have an opportunity to get into that when we talk about the next bill that is scheduled for this afternoon.

I'll note that the Toronto Star reported, "Ontario's high-profile electronic waste disposal program is failing to recycle millions of computers and televisions it promised to keep out of landfills." That's pretty instructive. You make a commitment to a big program and, in fact, even though you collect funds, it doesn't divert the waste that needs to be diverted. That's a high-profile program. We deal with millions of electronic objects in this society. Cellphones, iPods, computers, televisions—it goes on and on and on. It is of consequence to us that we are able to acquire them after they've been worn out, to concentrate them, recycle them and make sure that we

don't have toxic metals and toxic chemicals going into our landfill and water tables.

The Toronto Star reported, "In its first year, the Ontario Electronic Stewardship—a private agency created by provincial regulation—gathered only a third of the 42,000 tonnes of toxin-laced equipment it was originally supposed to collect, according to reports obtained by the Star."

Then-Environment Minister John Gerretsen wanted to know why.

"I have been disappointed that OES—the Ontario Electronic Stewardship—haven't been able to meet the targets," Gerretsen said in an interview.

"I don't know what has gone wrong."

This was a mystery to the minister. It was beyond his knowledge, perhaps beyond the knowledge of most mortals; certainly beyond the knowledge of that mortal.

I want to say to you that the fine details of what happened may not be known to the minister or myself or to you, but we shouldn't find it that mystifying that when private industry is allowed to regulate itself, then things are not going to go according to the rosy plan that was set out by the McGuinty government. Those industries will look after their own interests first and secondarily deal with public policy issues.

No surprise; no mystery. One only has to look at the fundamental dynamics to understand where we will be taken.

1400

The spokesperson for Ontario Electronic Stewardship, the Ontario electronic recycling group, was quoted as blaming the problems on growing pains of a new program. They said, in terms of how it's supposed to work, according to the Star, "Companies or non-profits are designated as 'collectors' to pick up used electronics homeowners toss out by the millions. OES pays collectors up to \$235 a tonne out of 'eco fees' contained in the cost of each new electronic gadget sold (from \$2 to \$26 each). The OES then divides the haul from the collectors among eight approved recyclers, which extract usable components and safely dispose of toxic materials, like mercury or beryllium."

I'm addressing this whole question of failure in recycling because, in the end, the credibility of this water bill is based on whether or not this government has a track record of delivering the goods. In this area of recycling, of meeting its greenhouse gas emission targets, of dealing with transportation, it is not meeting its targets.

Now, that may be why there are no targets in the project before us. The bill allows the minister to set aspirational targets. I have to say that I could set an aspirational target today, and the minister, without benefit of a bill, could stand up and announce an aspirational target anyway. He doesn't need a bill to do that. What we do need is a larger plan within which we can see how one would realistically get to those targets and a bill that would facilitate that. I don't see those targets. I don't see that larger plan. I do see a bill that can be an announceable when the next election is upon us.

The Toronto Star went on talking about this particular problem with electronic recycling. According to the Star, "Canada bans the export of e-waste to developing countries, but Canadian companies are allowed to ship materials to brokers in the U.S.," and the United States "has no rules against transporting materials offshore."

If you saw the film *Manufactured Landscapes* and saw the incredible amount of electronic waste sitting in heaps in China, people working without protection and dealing with lead, cadmium, a variety of toxic metals and materials, that probably gave you pause. It certainly gave me pause, because we now have a much clearer picture of what happens with this industry-driven program. We know where those materials, or many of them, wind up.

That's why my hope for this bill to accomplish what has to be accomplished is so small: because I've followed the history, I've seen the pictures, and they don't give me hope.

In fact, again according to the Star, "The current electronic recycling program in Ontario is a failure," said one of the people familiar with this industry. "It doesn't meet its targets for diversion and environmentally sound recycling. And it provides no incentive for investment into green technology and jobs in the province." A pretty substantial statement.

"The problems came to a head in January when Waste Diversion Ontario filed a rare 'failure to comply' notice against the OES, whose board includes Sony, Hewlett Packard and Best Buy executives. It told OES it had to do a better job of collecting the material and selling consumers on the program."

Critics and others who are concerned about the environment in this province say that the Ontario electronics system "must be more accountable because the public is supporting the program financially." People put in tens of millions of dollars a year to make this program work, and yet, as I've said, the program failed miserably when it did not meet its targets.

The head of the organization said, "It is just our first year." But when you look at other jurisdictions, you find that they do somewhat better. Saskatchewan, in its first year, collected 1.7 kilograms of e-waste per capita, compared to an estimated 1.3 kilograms in Ontario, the largest consumer of electronics in the country.

We have a pretty sophisticated industrial base here in Ontario. We've got people who manufacture; we've got people who process; we have administrators and managers capable of doing an awful lot. Yet our record when dealing with e-waste is substantially weaker than that of Saskatchewan. One has to ask why. Why should we have hope in this bill when we can't, in fact, see the government delivering on the recycling of e-waste?

I don't buy that this is a first-year problem. This is a government that announces grand programs and doesn't follow through on delivery. It happens more frequently than not. It is of consequence to the people of this province, and it certainly is of consequence when it comes to our discussing this bill and whether in fact it will deliver water conservation, whether in fact it will deliver economic development and whether in fact it will address

the changing challenges that we face environmentally and economically in Ontario.

Just to finish up on electronic waste: When it got rolling a year ago, the Ontario Electronic Stewardship system had a target of 42,000 tonnes of material to collect. Only 17,000 tonnes have been collected. That's quite a failure: only slightly more than a third. The target was downgraded to 33,000 tonnes partway through last year, but they still fell short. That is of consequence.

In the end, this is a government that naively trusts industry to run programs in the public interest rather than for their own benefit. That is not a reasonable assumption for a society that has gone through a global banking meltdown, for a society that has seen self-regulation by industry fail in the propane industry. One has to ask whether this government fully understands what goes on in the outside world, outside these four walls, and is willing to act in a way that takes account of that real knowledge.

The consequences are, too frequently, very clear and negative. When we look at the energy issue, this is a government that is ramping up hydro rates for ratepayers, with little to show in terms of reduced usage or emissions. It has no current energy plan, although I understand an electricity plan is forthcoming in the next 48 hours. It's astounding to me, though, that we've gone for the last few years without an electricity plan. We've been making investments—we've been making billion-dollar commitments to facilities—without a plan that has been reviewed, for either environmental consequences or consequences of rates, through the Ontario Energy Board. That's the way this government operates.

When I first came here, in 2006, the electricity supply plan was introduced, and if you will remember, Speaker, it was rushed through. There were no environmental hearings. Things had to happen fast. Ultimately, under the next energy minister, Mr. Smitherman, it was found to be inadequate. It was found to be wanting. It was set aside. That was a few years ago. We were told at the time that a new plan would come forward, dealing with conservation targets and efficiency targets. That didn't happen, although it may well happen within the next 48 hours. We shall see.

This government makes commitments of billions of dollars, commitments that will be of consequence for the remaining lifetime of most of the people who sit in this chamber as legislators and for the big bulk of the lifetime of the pages who are serving here today, decisions that will have consequences for us, our children and our grandchildren, done without an environmental review, done without an economic review, done on an ad hoc basis.

This government makes commitments in the billions of dollars without a coherent plan for dealing with electricity use, electricity production or electricity transmission for decades to come. That's the record of this government when it deals with large-scale infrastructure and environmental issues.

If you can't quite get it right when you're talking about the nervous system of a whole society, when you

ad hoc it on multi-billion-dollar commitments, what hope is there for a little water bill that can actually generate employment, if it was properly delivered, and deal with fundamental problems of supply of water? One has to ask, given this record, what hope?

1410

Two years ago, the government called for new conservation and green energy targets from the Ontario Power Authority. That was two years ago. It has taken two years to, perhaps in the next day or so, give us those numbers.

This past summer, the government cut its solar feed-in tariff at the last minute, when hundreds of Ontarians had put together business plans and submitted proposals based on a particular rate for the electricity that they would be providing. People have made very substantial commitments. They found that they were in trouble. I got calls from rural Ontario, all over Ontario, from people who felt that they had been hung out to dry. This government, instead of giving people the confidence that it could deliver, introduced a major bump in the road. My sense is that a lot of members of this provincial Parliament, not just myself, received phone calls and emails from people in rural and small-town Ontario who had made the decision to go forward and were finding themselves out on a limb.

Ultimately, the government backed off, but only because it was very clear that there was going to be an explosion in rural Ontario over what people saw as their being misled, and I'm being generous, Speaker. I know there's other language that could be used. They saw themselves as being misled. They were profoundly angry. That kind of approach undermines any confidence that this bill will actually deliver what has to be delivered and that it will actually make the difference that Ontario needs to see made.

I think it's a good idea to have a water conservation bill. I think it's a good idea to have a large-scale water conservation program. My argument, and I want to reinforce it, is that I don't see this government actually delivering what has to happen with this bill, just as the legislation they passed in 2007 is still not fully in effect—2007, held over until the 2011 election. It's one of those really late presents. It took a long time to unwrap. Maybe it will be unwrapped for October of next year. That's not yet clear.

This government plunged ahead with a billion dollars and more on the not-so-smart meter program, a program that is hiking consumer hydro costs without showing evidence of reducing consumption or shifting usage. You don't have to go very far with Google to see what the American experience was with those meters. The value of the energy they saved was less than the cost of putting in the meters; thus, meters that were supposed to save people money, save electricity companies money, had to be subsidized by those electricity companies and by the consumers who pay their bills to those electricity companies. That's why consumer groups in the United States opposed them, because they could see they weren't

actually delivering reductions in energy consumption; they were adding to people's electricity bills.

Conservation and efficiency is the cheapest thing you can do in terms of providing supply, whether it's for water or electricity. Not-so-smart meters don't meet that test, and yet this government has gone ahead with them. Instead of putting billions into people's homes to allow them to cut their electricity bills or cut their water bills, which would have been very, very useful, we put in meters that will make their lives more difficult and that will, in the end, not deliver the efficiency and conservation that Ontario needs to make sure its electricity system works well.

This government, in this bill, claiming to be so advanced environmentally, is still committed to substantial construction of nuclear power plants in Ontario, construction that I don't believe we can afford; construction that will divert funds away from conservation, renewable power and efficiency; construction that will undermine the competitiveness of this province in the decades to come. That's where this government is at in the whole area of efficiency in environment and in energy.

What hope is there that a government that has difficulty making the right choices when it comes to a system as critical as our electricity system is actually going to deliver what has to happen with this water bill?

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has said that this province, this Liberal government, doesn't even have a comprehensive plan for efficiency in conservation. He made a number of very instructive recommendations as to how Ontario should actually be dealing with efficiency and conservation in the electricity field. He recommended "that the secretary of cabinet direct the development of a comprehensive energy conservation strategy encompassing all major energy sources used in Ontario. The strategy should be developed with public input." Pretty reasonable; I don't see why anyone would quibble with that. I don't see why any government wouldn't implement that. I think that's instructive for the bill we're dealing with today, because this bill talks about accelerating water conservation technology but, as I've said, it doesn't put forward any targets for the amount of water consumption we'll be reducing. We haven't figured it out on the energy side of the equation, and we're repeating the mistakes that were made on that side of the equation.

The Environmental Commissioner's recommendations around conservation are very practical. If we need a comprehensive energy conservation strategy, we certainly need a comprehensive water conservation strategy. Why has this government not learned from the mistakes it's made in the energy field? Do they simply think that they didn't make a mistake and that's the way things should be operating, that they want to make sure things are vague and they want to make sure things are narrow so that they don't have to deal either with having their performance assessed or coming into conflict with those interests that want to have a high level of consumption? That's not clear, but to have ignored the Environmental

Commissioner and what he said about energy when this bill was written is a huge error.

The Environmental Commissioner recommends further that we need to "stabilize electricity policy, and provide clarity and certainty to that policy." The Environmental Commissioner recommended that the Ministry of Energy—the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure at the time—"move quickly to clarify the role of the integrated power system plan and to finalize the key conservation regulations and directives under the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009." He's right. He's right in that field, and he would be right if his commentary was applied to water.

There's no question that electricity is critical to the functioning of a society. So is water. Shut down electricity in this town and it shuts down very fast. Shut down water in this province, and within hours you would have very substantial disruptions. I think that's a gross understatement. We don't have a comprehensive water plan for this province, and this bill isn't going to introduce it.

The Environmental Commissioner, with regard to efficiency and conservation in the energy field, said that we needed to examine the role of benchmarking and energy targets. The Environmental Commissioner recommends "that the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure establish targets to reduce provincial electricity consumption. These consumption targets will supplement the province's existing targets to reduce peak electricity demand and fulfill the government's commitment to build a culture of conservation." Yeah. With no offence to the Environmental Commissioner, you don't have to be a genius to make that recommendation. Yes, you need to set targets; there are none for water. They need to be clear. They need to give you a framework within which you're going to act.

In the course of preparing to speak today, I came across a notation that California's target is to reduce water consumption by 20%. Well, there's no mention in the documentation we've been provided with as to how much we plan to reduce water consumption in Ontario, but certainly it would be helpful, in assessing whether or not this bill was useful, if we had a target that people could measure its viability against. The McGuinty government should have learned from its experience with energy how in fact it needs to approach the water issue and should have incorporated that into the documentation before us.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, talking about energy, "recommends that the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure establish reportable benchmarking by sector. This would assist the government in deciding whether to establish targets to reduce the use of natural gas, oil, propane and transportation fuels, and would make the targets meaningful."

In fact, with a small amount of translation, that applies entirely to what we're talking about today, because there are different sectors using different amounts of water in different ways. There's the industrial sector. There's the

resource processing sector. There's the food processing sector. There's the industrial/commercial sector. There's residential. There are different areas with different potentials and different levels of consumption.

Again, this bill and the documentation that comes with the bill do not address what those targets need to be and do not talk about the sectoral needs of this province, again reflecting the fact that this bill is vague and, at the same time, narrow. It only talks about a small part of water consumption, and even then, within that reality, it is vague.

1420

The Environmental Commissioner, talking about conservation and efficiency in the electricity sector, "recommends that the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure develop a reporting mechanism to track progress on directives which ensures accountability and transparency."

It makes sense to me. Why not? How do you know that you've done what you set out to do if you don't have reporting mechanisms? How can you hold a government accountable? How can the people know whether they're delivering what they said they'd deliver, unless there are reporting mechanisms that people can understand quickly and clearly?

It makes sense that people would be able to track whether or not this bill, if adopted, was actually implemented along the lines that those who put it forward claimed it would perform. That would be really useful. I don't see that here. That's something that should be taken from the energy sector, from the Environmental Commissioner's recommendations on that sector, and put in place so that people can actually judge whether or not the government is delivering on what it says it's going to deliver on.

Right now, it doesn't have to deliver much of anything, other than trying to get the bill passed, to say in an election leaflet coming soon to a home near you, "We have a plan." That may be the full and total function of this particular bill.

I've talked about this government's record when it comes to climate change, when it comes to energy and when it comes to dealing with waste. In all of these areas there are substantial failings, and the nature of those failings says to us that it is legitimate to have real concerns about whether or not this bill will deliver what needs to be delivered.

I'm going to go on to another section, but before I do that, I just can't resist because there was a really fascinating piece—and I guess you have to be a politician to call this a fascinating piece. But in the Environmental Commissioner's report, Rethinking Energy Conservation in Ontario, he talked about a groundbreaking piece of legislation brought forward by this government a number of years ago.

With similar fanfare to the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, the government passed the Energy Conservation Leadership Act in 2006. It was a big deal. It was a big conservation act. Jobs were promised. I'm sure

the millennium was promised. Light shone on this Legislature; clouds parted in the sky. The Energy Conservation Leadership Act had many of the same enabling provisions as the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, including the ability to require public agencies to develop conservation plans and consider conservation and procurement and capital investment—much like the bill before us today. A surprising coincidence? A surprising similarity? Are these twins separated at birth? I don't know, but very similar acts—the ability to override restrictions on the use of conservation technologies and even the power to require home energy information upon property sales. Yet in the three years between the passage of the ECLA, the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, and its replacement by the Green Energy Act, the only action taken by the government was one minor regulation that overrode barriers to the use of clotheslines. While laudable in principle and ambitious in scope, the conservation leadership act had minimal influence on energy conservation in Ontario.

Now, I have to say, the Environmental Commissioner has a sense of humour because there's a very jaunty picture of some laundry hanging out on a line in his report. Three years after grand announcements, after, I'm sure, very, very heartfelt speeches about the need to protect the environment, the only thing that was done with that act was to make sure that clotheslines were legal again in Ontario. That does not encourage me. It does not give me hope for the success of this bill. The past as a predictor of the future is not a really happy, bright or cheery thing.

I want to talk about some of the realities of water in Ontario, and I want to raise a point that was put forward by my colleague from Kenora—Rainy River. He noted the failure of this government to protect the quality of water. The Toronto Star reported in 2008 that the Canadian Medical Association Journal noted that Ontario had 679 boil-water alerts between 2006 and 2008, the most in any province. So I think the simple reality is that, from time to time, water systems will fail, and if people are alert, monitoring and taking action to ensure the public is protected, we shouldn't be totally surprised. But for us to have more boil-water alerts than any other province is noteworthy.

The Star went on to report: "Hundreds of 'boil water' advisories have been issued in Ontario in the past two years, placing communities on high alert for tainted drinking water, the Canadian Medical Association Journal reports.

"In a story published yesterday, the CMAJ reported that since 2006"—in 2006, Dalton McGuinty was Premier, just so that it's on the record and there's no confusion as to under whose watch things happened—"Ontario had 679 such alerts—warnings by public health departments telling residents they cannot ensure the safety of their drinking water without boiling it first.

"But outside experts say there are many reasons why such advisories are issued, ranging from the bureaucratic, such as incomplete water sampling, to the systemic, such

as problems in the water treatment plant process, to active health risks, such as toxic contamination.”

It went on to say: “Without an analysis of the reasons for each advisory, it is not clear that water is putting people at risk, said University of Toronto professor Ron Hofmann, who specializes in drinking-water engineering....

“The CMAJ reported nationwide figures for boil-water advisories, with Ontario, the most populous province, in the lead with 679 ... followed by British Columbia with 530 and Newfoundland with 228. The CMAJ reported there were 1,766 boil-water advisories in place as of March 31, 2008,” in Canada.

Now, boil-water advisories are not in place everywhere. They tend to be focused on the most disadvantaged communities in this province. First Nations communities are the hardest hit. Eight of the 21 First Nations communities listed on Health Canada as having high-risk drinking water systems and drinking water advisories in effect are in Ontario. That’s substantial for a province that went through Walkerton, understands the consequences of failing to deal with contaminated water, has made very visible and public commentary about the need to deal with it, and still, eight of 21 of the First Nations communities listed as having high-risk drinking water systems are here in Ontario.

Former Ontario Environment Minister John Gerretsen says that First Nations issues were among his concerns when drafting this Water Opportunities Act: “It would not be right for Ontario to export our tremendous [water treatment] technology without first making sure that our people, including First Nations, have the best protection when it comes to the quality of their water.”

Frankly, I think he’s right. I think it’s going to be hard to sell technology abroad when people know that there are ongoing problems with water in communities in this province such that people have to boil water before they can drink it.

Think of yourself being in a sales meeting somewhere in Europe. Someone listening to the pitch from an Ontario company Googles the province and “water contamination” and finds, “Wow. This province that is saying that it has this great technology has all these boil-water advisories. Let’s think again about that.”

That has consequence for the people who are affected by the water systems that are failing and it has consequence for our reputation to actually sell products in the wider world. We should be making the decision to have clean water based on the first alone, but I throw in the second because for some people it’s the question of marketability that will be more of a determinant. We should not be in a position where people regularly have to deal with contaminated water systems.

Chief Bryan LaForme of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, in April: “Walkerton had an effect in mainstream Ontario, but not in First Nations.” Twenty-five per cent of his southern Ontario community does not have access to clean drinking water.

Slow implementation of the Clean Water Act passed in 2006 is of consequence to us here today. That act

passed in 2006, but the source water protection plans for watersheds have only started to be developed and won’t be completed until August 2012. That’s six years. This is one of the more significant issues in this province, of consequence to settlement, of consequence to the environment, of consequence to the economy.

1430

I was here for the debate on that act and told about the urgency of forward movement. Now we can see it’s very clear: six years from adoption to actually bring forward the watershed plans. These source water protection plans, which we were rightly told were so urgent to put together in 2006, still await the putting together and still are not complete. There are years to go before that act—part of that act—will be in effect.

What does that mean in terms of this water conservation bill that’s before us today? What it says to me is that potentially, that act, which was passed in the lead up to an election, because there had to be something on an election flyer that said we were taking action on water—this bill before us may well be our 2011 election flyer water act. We will see. I look forward to finding Liberal pamphlets on doorsteps in my riding to see if they talk about this water act. This government has failed to address a variety of critical environmental issues, critical issues when it comes to water.

I think initiatives on water make a lot of sense. This government has a very poor track record of delivering on programs that they have described as critical. We should not hold a huge amount of hope out for what comes forward from this bill, should it be passed. Ontario deserves better than that.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I certainly listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks from the member from Toronto–Danforth. In fact, I listened very intently to the nice things he said about me, for which I’d like to thank him.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: And they were well meant.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Certainly it was not our intent in any way to have this bill be perceived as a possible way of privatizing the delivery of water, waste water services, in this province. I’m glad that the member has acknowledged that our amendment has ensured that that is clear to all concerned.

The member also talked about our government’s track record, and I’d say to him that I have a few really concrete examples that I’m certainly proud of, and I think they speak directly to our track record. Just last year, we provided an additional \$70 million to upgrade the province’s six remaining primary water treatment plants, meaning every plant is now a secondary treatment plant. Certainly that’s a good thing, a very concrete measure.

He also alluded to the situation on many First Nations reserves, as did his colleague from Timmins–James Bay last week. Although I think it’s very clear that our federal partners are not stepping up to the plate the way they should do, our Ministry of the Environment here in On-

tario has supported aboriginal communities. They've provided engineering and technical advice and are carrying out conformance assessments of First Nations systems upon request; 37 have been done so far. They've provided support to help First Nations communities interested in connecting to a municipal water or waste water system; 10 systems have been connected. And they've been working with First Nations associations and training organizations to increase First Nations water and waste water operator certification levels; there are 132 First Nations operators now certified.

This bill—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Toronto–Danforth, as I said last week, was very well informed on this topic and, I believe, very passionate about many of the things he refers to. Certainly safe, clean drinking water is something that all sides of this House would agree with.

I really take my lead on this particular bill from the work done by the region of Durham. They have a very good report, issued on June 15, 2010. The report is in response to the EBR posting. There remains in here a number of suspicious comments—not suspicious on their side. I'm giving voice to their comments, which are in themselves suspicious of the government's motive here on the Water Opportunities Act. It does imply here that some regions of the province aren't dealing with their water supply appropriately. If you look at section 4.17, pressure on water and sewer user rates, some areas are not providing full-cost recovery in their system of billing.

What this bill does is download additional standards and the costs associated with them, so they're raising the standards by downloading them to the municipalities, who are now going to have to pay for more it. In fact, it mandates that municipalities now are going to have to redo their software and billing system. We've concluded, in a general sense, that this is smart meters for water. This is what we've determined. We've seen the fiasco under smart meters for electricity, how prices have risen and will continue to rise; even the Premier has admitted that. Now we're seeing it for water. You can be assured, as you are listening today, that your water bill is going to go up around 8% to 15% every year under Premier McGuinty's plan. So this is smart meters for water.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do on environmental matters, to my good friend from Toronto–Danforth. He started off his speech by talking about one of the amendments that the Liberal government accepted in committee which I think went a long way to assuage the fears of many of us that this bill was really about privatization.

He went on then to describe the rest of the bill in terms that I think all of us know from reading it, from listening to the discussion. This is a vague and narrow bill. It is not going to do very much about anything. It has a very

narrow frame, a very narrow issue. It's all about looking at how you tinker around the edges, when most people in this province are looking for major reform.

He also talked about the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. I remember that previous environmental debate. I remember all of the huge extrapolations and the people talking about the wonder of how this was going to save the planet. In fact, all that happened, and my friend from Toronto–Danforth correctly points this out, is that the government was able by regulation to make clotheslines legal again in Ontario in those places that were seeing not to make them legal. This is much the same. This bill is going to be exactly the same, and it is a crying shame to me, particularly as it relates to our First Nations communities across this province. Those members of the Legislature who have had an opportunity to go into northern and isolated rural First Nations communities will know that the drinking water is not safe. The poverty is endemic. The people are frustrated. The young people have nothing to do. One of the first things we could do is to attack strongly how we help them with their water supply, to make sure that they're safe in all things.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm pleased to have just a couple of minutes to respond in part to the member from Toronto–Danforth. I also want to reflect briefly, if I could, on his comments—I was here at the beginning; I missed a little of his hour or so, just at the end—in respect to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I want to say that because I think it's important, when we have that kind of commentary, to reflect on it, that there is a lot of good work that does get done outside of this place, outside of this forum in here. Good work is done here on occasion too, but often the work happens outside. When the debate happens in here, obviously it is government's job to put forward the government position, the opposition's job to challenge that, but it's always good to hear about the cooperative efforts that occur to make legislation better, often in the hall, and the hours that are spent doing that.

This legislation really is about opportunities. I think it's about water opportunities. It's about recognizing that there is a \$400-billion water opportunity globally and that we want to be able to develop the expertise here in Ontario, to export not our water resource but the expertise around water that we can develop here in Ontario. Certainly, it's a framework piece of legislation. It's intended to allow that, among other things, to happen.

1440

Both the member from Durham, who was speaking a moment or so ago about the region of Durham, and I sat on regional council along the way. We're certainly well aware of the good work that some municipalities, including Durham, have been doing. Unfortunately, he digressed into another conversation and didn't have the opportunity—he needed probably 20 minutes to talk about all the good work Durham is doing and not about the other agenda that he wanted to speak to, so I'd be

anxious, if he has the opportunity, to hear more about that as well.

This is a good piece of legislation. It's been well researched, well thought out with the community, and will serve this province well.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the members for Oak Ridges–Markham, Durham, Beaches–East York, and Pickering–Scarborough East for standing and addressing the issue.

I particularly want to note in my last remaining time how important it is that it has been emphasized in this chamber that this bill cannot be used to privatize public water services, either the hard infrastructure or the service itself. That is a reality that people have to carry forward in their thinking on this. Otherwise, I think in the hour that I spoke I conveyed most of my thoughts. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wilkinson has moved third reading of Bill 72. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I've just received a deferral slip. It reads,

“To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

“Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the third reading vote on Bill 72, An Act to enact the Water Opportunities Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts in respect of water conservation and other matters, by Minister Wilkinson, be deferred until Tuesday, November 23, 2010.”

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Orders of the day.

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

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

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

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

d'énergie et les impôts fonciers et apporter des modifications corrélatives.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I will be sharing my time, as I do always, very generously with my colleague the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I thank my colleagues in the House, and of course the government House leader for being so generous in sharing her time with me. I'm pleased to stand in the House today for third reading of the Enhancement of the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit for Seniors and Ontario Families Act, 2010.

I would like to start by highlighting a commitment that this government has made in the 2010 Ontario budget. In that document, we announced our intention to convert the Ontario property tax credit into the Ontario energy and property tax credit in order to deliver more than \$1.2 billion in annual support to low- and middle-income Ontarians. The proposed legislation that we're discussing today not only fulfills that commitment but also includes two significant enhancements to boost support for Ontario families and for seniors.

Just a few weeks ago, in late September, the Premier and the Minister of Finance announced that our government is proposing to enhance the support we originally announced in the 2009 budget by \$70 million. With the proposed enhancement, we would deliver almost \$1.3 billion in annual support to 2.8 million Ontarians to help with the sales tax on energy and on their property taxes.

This bill also proposes to provide additional assistance to seniors. We're proposing to increase the income levels at which the credit begins to be reduced. This means that more seniors, many of whom live on fixed incomes, would benefit from the full credit and a greater number of seniors would qualify. With this proposed enhancement, 50,000 more seniors would be eligible for the credit and another 690,000 seniors in the province would receive a higher amount. In total, approximately 740,000 senior families and single seniors would see an increase in tax relief.

Seniors have worked hard to help build this province—the province, of course, that we enjoy today—and with this proposed tax credit, we're making it a little easier for them by putting the money back into their pockets to help with sales tax on their energy and with their property taxes.

The Ontario energy and property tax credit, or the OEPTC, is the latest tax relief we're announcing as part of the Open Ontario plan. The Open Ontario plan is a plan for jobs and a plan for growth that puts the economy on the right track and provides important support for Ontarians and their budgets. We started with tax relief for 93% of Ontario income tax payers on January 1, who get, on average, \$200 back into their wallets. It was a 17% cut on the tax rate on the first \$37,106 of income. That tax cut also took 90,000 lower-income Ontarians off the tax rolls all together.

We've also brought in a series of tax credits. They're harder to see because you usually apply for them on your

tax form, but tax credits are the most effective way to target those who need the help the most. For example, the Ontario sales tax credit is putting up to \$260 per person, including children, back into family budgets this year. For northern families, we've put in place the northern Ontario energy credit, worth up to \$200, to help with higher energy costs in the north. More than 50% of all northerners will benefit from this assistance.

Last month, we introduced legislation to create a children's activity tax credit, which is designed to make enrolling children in sports, arts and other activities just a little more affordable for parents. Broader in scope than the federal children's fitness tax credit, the proposed tax credit would give up to \$50 back per child, or \$100 if the child has a disability, for a very wide range of physical and non-physical activities.

That's not all: In the fall economic statement tabled this past week, we announced the Ontario clean energy benefit, which would give Ontario families, farms and small businesses a 10% benefit on their bills for five years. That would be 10% off electricity bills every month, effective January 1, 2010. This benefit would help over four million residential consumers and more than 400,000 small businesses and farms. For a typical household, this would mean saving about \$150 for 2011; for an average small business, it would be around \$1,700; and about \$2,000 for farms.

We know that electricity bills are rising because of the necessary and unavoidable new investments required to ensure that Ontario has a clean, modern and reliable system. That's why we're taking action through the proposed Ontario clean energy benefit, along with the other initiatives that support Ontario families.

Today, we're here to debate an important piece of legislation, one that would enhance a tax credit to help with the costs of maintaining a home. The Ontario energy and property tax credit would allow almost one million seniors to receive up to \$1,025 per year back in relief for the sales tax on energy and on property tax. This credit would also apply to non-seniors, to a maximum of \$900. In total, 2.8 million Ontarians would be entitled to receive, on average, \$455 a year.

Ontarians would be able to apply for the Ontario energy and property tax credit starting with their 2010 tax returns. The credit for 2011 and later years would be paid out four times a year, just like the new Ontario sales tax credit and the GST credit.

1450

This measure supports recommendations by social policy advocates to send out more frequent payments of property tax credits, rather than lump-sum payments, to improve cash flow to the recipients. In this way, Ontarians are receiving the funds when they need them.

I'd like to expand on how this tax credit would work. To target assistance to those who need it the most, the OEPTC would be income-tested. To provide additional assistance for seniors, we're proposing, as I mentioned, to increase the income level at which the credit begins to be reduced for seniors from those announced in the 2009 budget. The income threshold would be increased to

\$25,000 from \$20,000 for single seniors, and to \$30,000 from \$25,000 for senior couples and single seniors with dependent children. This follows improvements we announced in the 2009 budget, when the non-senior income thresholds were raised from \$4,000 to \$20,000 for single people and to \$25,000 for families, including single parents. For all recipients, the OEPTC would be reduced by 2% of adjusted family net income over the applicable income thresholds, which would be indexed annually for inflation. Non-seniors, including a family or single person who owns or rents a home, would be able to claim an amount for sales tax on energy up to \$200. In addition, they would be able to claim a property tax amount of \$50 plus 10% on their occupancy costs, to a maximum of \$700. This means that non-seniors would be able to receive up to \$900 in support every year.

A senior family or a single senior who owns or rents a home could claim an amount on sales tax on energy up to \$200. In addition, they would be able to claim a property tax amount of \$425 plus 10% of their occupancy costs, to a maximum of \$825, for a maximum of \$1,025 per year, as I mentioned earlier. Ontarians who do not pay property tax or rent but still pay for home energy, such as individuals who live on a reserve or in a public long-term-care home, would still be eligible for tax relief through the energy component of the proposed OEPTC.

Our government has been firmly committed to introducing innovative new programs that create measurable improvements in people's lives right here in Ontario. Over the past seven years, these investments have raised the quality of life of the people of Ontario, and are helping our economy and our families adapt to sweeping global changes. One of our priorities has been supporting programs that help Ontario seniors live safe, active and healthy lives. These programs include introducing the seniors' homeowner property tax grant to provide eligible senior homeowners with assistance with their property taxes. Over the next five years, we will be providing an additional \$1 billion through this grant, benefiting more than 600,000 seniors with low to middle incomes who own their own homes. Furthermore, our four-year \$1.1-billion aging at home strategy will provide support to seniors and their caregivers to help seniors stay healthy and live with dignity and independence in the comfort of their own homes. We've also expanded home care services to about 500,000 people in Ontario each year, and introduced legislative protections for Ontario seniors living in retirement homes under the new Retirement Homes Act.

Our government has also taken important steps to ensure seniors who cannot live at home enjoy access to the highest-quality long-term-care services by making key investments in long-term-care homes and increasing front-line staff. There are various measures we've taken for pension reform and retirement income adequacy, which are key priorities for the McGuinty government. Ontario is playing a lead role in a national effort to review the state of the current retirement income system, its future sustainability and options that could strengthen the system for our seniors. Our government is also

engaged in modernizing the Pension Benefits Act, making the first major enhancement to our province's pension system in more than 20 years and introducing the second step of reforms just a few weeks ago.

The McGuinty government is supporting seniors through reforms to the rules for locked-in retirement savings accounts, giving seniors and other Ontarians more flexibility in accessing funds in these accounts.

We're making investments that help provide seniors with more opportunities to stay active, healthy and involved in their communities. This includes investing more than \$1.2 million to expand our elderly persons' centres program, which supports seniors' centres across the province, and \$4.2 million invested in elder abuse prevention, including providing \$900,000 annually to the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse to better assist victims in communities across this province.

As you see, our government continues to work hard to ensure that Ontario seniors have access to quality programs and quality services that enable them to live healthy, safe, active, independent lives.

The global economic downturn, however, has created several challenges for Ontario families, and the McGuinty government is making investments to ensure that Ontario families are supported, especially during these tough economic times.

We're investing in seniors and we're investing in youth. Our full-day kindergarten provides kids with the foundation they need for future learning, supporting student achievement and building on success that we've already seen in the primary class sizes and in increasing graduation rates.

We're helping Ontario families and helping working parents to continue to have access to quality child care while playing an active role in the labour force at the same time. Of course, it's disheartening that the federal government has declined to ensure stability in the child care sector, but our government has chosen to step in with an investment of \$63.5 million a year to permanently fill the gap and preserve approximately 8,500 child care spaces. This brings Ontario's annual investment in child care to approximately \$860 million. This also helps build a stronger economy by making it easier for parents to leave social assistance for employment.

Under the OCB, families continue to receive children's benefits, regardless of the source of their income. The government remains committed to a maximum annual OCB of \$1,310 per child by 2013, as announced in the Ontario poverty reduction strategy.

These are just a few examples of how the McGuinty government is investing in Ontario's families, because we believe that by continuing to make investments in our families, we will ensure Ontario's success for generations to come.

The proposed Ontario energy and property tax credit is just the latest example of investments our government is making to support Ontario families and Ontario seniors. These are investments we're making to support the very foundation of our Open Ontario plan, which is Ontario's people.

Furthermore, the OEPTC is one part of our larger, comprehensive tax reform plan, which provides significant tax cuts and relief for Ontario families and for individuals. Through our Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth and other measures announced since the 2009 budget, we would deliver \$12 billion in permanent and temporary tax relief over three years to Ontario families and individuals. This tax relief, as well as our Open Ontario plan for economic development, and new investments are helping Ontarians by putting money back into their pockets, ensuring they have access to good jobs now and in the future.

The proposed OEPTC is another step we're taking to support Ontario families. It supports our 2010 budget commitment to help Ontarians with home energy costs and property tax costs.

I wanted to take a moment before I conclude to quote Susan Eng from CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, and her presentation that she made on November 4. Susan Eng has this to say: "CARP members will be very pleased that the Ontario government has responded to their call for relief. The targeted relief for lower-income seniors and moving to include a higher income bracket as well will be welcome news, and directs the relief where it's most needed but without leaving out modest-income seniors."

1500

I'd like to conclude by re-emphasizing the important fact that the proposed Ontario energy and property tax credit would provide almost \$1.3 billion in annual support to 2.8 million people in Ontario. That is why I ask for the support of the House in passing this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Robert Bailey): Questions or comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am really pleased to just offer a few comments on this Bill 109, because it really is just another example of the sort of fun with figures that this government is constantly playing.

Here we have a situation where we had a property tax credit that is now being revoked with this. It was going to go up to \$900 per year and now it's being changed into the property tax and energy credit, but it's still the same money we're talking about here. There's no more money that's being offered, no more of a credit, because now what's going to happen is that the property tax component part is going to be capped at \$700 rather than \$900, and now there is a \$200 credit that's going to be available as an energy credit.

It's just sort of creative accounting that we see consistently, as we're about to see with yet another bill that's coming forward that is going to allow people a 10% rebate on their energy bills—but we're going to have to borrow a billion dollars in order to be able to pay for it.

Quite frankly, in my view, that's simply not responsible because this is more long-term debt that we're going to be saddling our children and grandchildren with. We need to really come to grips with this, but it's all a direct result of the disastrous energy policies and lack of a long-term comprehensive plan for energy in the

province of Ontario that this government has miserably failed to address.

By having a policy that is heavily loaded in favour of green renewable energy—of course we want to do that, but the fact of the matter is that's not going to keep all the lights on for residential consumers in Ontario at the present time, nor is it going to be able to allow us to attract the kinds of businesses we want to have here in Ontario to replace the many manufacturing jobs that were lost during the recession. We need to do whatever we can to encourage businesses to come to Ontario. We need to come to grips with our energy plan.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my friend as she was doing the one-hour leadoff. I had expected to hear a great deal more, as she was waxing so eloquently as to how this government is doing such amazing things to help seniors and the poor and children across this province in the wake of energy bills that are spiralling out of control.

I listened to her as she quite carefully and methodically listed off all the little, tiny programs that are being put in place to try to assuage all of those hurtful things that are happening to families and seniors as a result of the HST and skyrocketing hydro and energy rates.

I listened to her with great interest. I was saddened, though, I must say, when she sat down after some 17 minutes. I know that everything she said made sense, but I would have thought that there was so much more that she needed to say to defend her government in terms of what seems to be happening every day in this place and in all the editorial contents in newspapers across this great province as they descend, oh, so strongly against this government and its policies.

But I thank her for having one of those rare epiphany moments where she stands up for a government when hardly anyone else will do it. In that, she did her fellow members so very proud, and I think it shows a great deal of courage on her part to say what she said and how she said it.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's always a great delight to listen to my colleague the exceptional member from Kitchener–Conestoga, who had a great deal of experience in the education sector before she came here to Queen's Park in 2007. We certainly know that she does spend an incredible amount of time with various seniors' organizations in the wonderful area of Kitchener–Conestoga, which I believe includes the wonderful community of Elmira, the home of the great Mennonite population here in Ontario.

She certainly went into the details on the ability to help and provide an energy and property tax credit for seniors and families in the province of Ontario: to help those hard-working families that we know go out each and every day to do their best to move Ontario's yardsticks forward; and our seniors in this wonderful prov-

ince, who have provided the great environment which we all enjoy.

It's interesting. I compared my own energy bill in Peterborough from October 2009 to October 2010. I have a smart meter; I've had one with a load-limiter in place for the last two years. I have my bills right here. And year over year, October to October, my energy costs have gone up exactly \$8.50. If any member wants to take a look at the profile of my bill in Peterborough, I would gladly show them. We've had a smart meter with a load-limiter in place for the last two years. We get our electricity from Peterborough Utilities, which is owned by the city of Peterborough. They provide a dividend of some \$5 million each and every year to the city of Peterborough. I'd be prepared to share that. I think it's time that we really called into question some of these exaggerated statements we've heard in the House about energy costs.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to comment on the speech by the member from Conestoga. Look, the government can put a lot of spin on all these sort of—I call them rescue-piece types of legislation. However, I talk to people on the street, I talk to people at seniors' events and Santa Claus parades. They just had a big one yesterday in Orillia. I can tell you that people are so disillusioned with this government's energy file that they have no confidence in whatever they're doing. I just did an interview with a radio station back home. They're trying to figure out what they're actually up to, because every week they come out with something, but at the same time people—the radio announcer said, "I've got my own bill. All the other things that are on the bill with the consumption is more money than the actual consumption now." It's higher and higher than ever.

I think it's easy for the government to bring out this legislation and the messaging they use around it, but they're not fooling the people of Ontario; I think the polling shows that. I think the general population feels that this government has, not only on the energy file but with the harmonized sales tax, with some of the health care issues, with issues around the economy, the deficit etc.—I think that people are on to this government. It's very unfortunate that the government continues down this path, thinking that they're going to try to—certain words you can't use in this House, but the reality is that people have caught on to a government that's basically worn out and tired. The people in Ontario want change. They want positive change, and they're looking for platforms from other parties. We hope the platform that our party will come out with will be something that will be very positive to the citizens of Ontario, include transparency and, more importantly, have respect for the taxpayers' dollars in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to respond and to acknowledge the members from Whitby–Oshawa,

Beaches–East York, Peterborough and Simcoe North for their comments.

The member from Beaches–East York—I have to respond because he talked about my eloquence; how can you let that go? Thank you. Of course, I listened intently to him as well. He did listen intently too; he turned his chair around and stared right at me and listened very intently. I know that he heard me talk about this OEPTC, the proposed enhancements, how 50,000 more seniors will be eligible for the credit. I know he heard me say that another 690,000 seniors will receive a higher amount, and I know he heard me say that a total of approximately 740,00 senior families and single seniors would see tax relief. Look, I think we can all agree that seniors have worked hard to build this province, a province that we all enjoy today. Certainly, with this proposed tax credit, we're making it a little bit easier for them by putting the money back into their pockets to help them with their sales tax relief on their energy and their property taxes.

1510

The epiphany, of course, that the member from Beaches–East York referred to—I love that word. That is one of my favourite words. You don't have to listen to my epiphany. I want to share with you the epiphany of members from my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, who had this to say: Cyril Ridout, who is the board chair for Community Care Concepts, which serves all three townships of Woolwich, Wellesley and Wilmot, and Meals on Wheels, and who goes into the homes of seniors, says, "As a member of the Community Care Concepts board and a volunteer driver for patients and Meals on Wheels, I'm aware of the needs of many seniors who are on fixed incomes. I know that they will welcome your announcement" of this OEPTC. "It may well be the difference that will allow them to remain comfortably in their own home."

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to third reading of Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments. I'm going to speak for a few minutes, but I know that the member from Durham has a lot to say on this bill, so I will share my time with the member from Durham.

I have spoken at length to this bill on second reading, so I won't repeat myself and go over everything I've already said. We supported the bill on second reading and we plan to support it again on third reading, but we certainly believe that this bill was more about politics than anything else. Ontario families are facing huge increases in their energy bills, and it seems like every week there's another tax credit that comes down the pipe from this government as they try to curry favour with the people of the province.

But, as has been pointed out, there was an existing property tax credit of \$900, and they've kind of rejiggered

it a bit and expanded some of the threshold so that more people can access it. It's interesting. The old tax credit was \$900; they reduced it to \$700 and then added a \$200 energy component to bring it back up to \$900, although more people can access that \$200 energy component, so the total cost of the actual tax credit is \$70 million. That, when you spread it out across the province, is a relatively small tax credit for the people of the province.

I would have to ask, what's the motive behind this? I'd say it's more about politics than anything else. The government, as has been mentioned, is not looking that great in the polls. Energy bills are a huge concern to the people of the province, and so we're seeing various initiatives to lessen the burden a little bit.

This is a letter from a constituent of mine which kind of demonstrates the way people are feeling out there. This one is mainly connected with energy:

"Dear Mr. Miller

"Thank you for responding to me.

"Basically I am pissed off with the HST.

"In my letter I listed a few things I pay more and more. Another thing I can add is my water heater rental. Hydro is my main heat source. Nursing licences are subject to HST. I need them to work.

"To simplify, the HST is a smokescreen to a PST hike; adding new products and services as I have previously listed. This tax grab by the Liberals will certainly add revenue to pay for misspending of tax dollars—notably eHealth...." You would think that I wrote this or the opposition wrote this, but this is from a constituent in my riding, a constituent in Huntsville.

"As for health care the LHINs eat up tax dollars for overpaid managers. Lack of dollars get to front-line workers, mostly for patients. I see bed cuts and nursing layoffs mostly because new nurses are losing faith in secure health care jobs."

I'm going on: "How convenient: the HST a year before he is elected. Take a year to get revenue and then spend it next year at election time.

"The HST is bad because PST is being added to services and products never taxed before. Wastage and false hopes occur. In health care, for example, OPSEU reports \$1 million is wasted on consultants. In power, false hopes to generate power with wind or solar when the technology is not a sure thing.

"I hope you can pressure the Liberals to stop this mess. I am nervous because revenue is being taken from me and added to taxes when I see no return in services."

That's from a nurse in Huntsville who wrote me that letter. I used that just as a good example of what you do, as the member from Simcoe North said, when you go to various events around your riding. That's the kind of thing that you hear from people. I think that unless the government members have earmuffs on as they go around their riding, they're probably hearing it too, which I think is why the government, in panic mode, is responding with a number of bills that it hopes will curry favour with the government.

We had the fall economic statement last week, and in the fall economic statement they talked about the fact that

they're introducing a bill to bring about a 10% reduction in energy costs. But as you look further in the fall economic statement, you also see that they're predicting a 46% increase in energy prices in the next five years—a 46% increase. We've already had substantial increases on energy bills with—I think most recently the Ontario Energy Board approved a 10% increase. There's HST of 8%. There's money for the backdoor energy audits. On the bill, there's the costs of smart meters and then there's time-of-use billing. You add all of that up and that's a pretty substantial increase. Then, in their fall economic statement delivered last Thursday, they're predicting another 46% increase in hydro bills. So, great, they're going to give us 10% and a small tax credit here in this bill to people, but we're seeing just a huge increase. So it's give a little back with one hand and take a whole bunch with the other.

The other interesting thing about last week's fall economic statement was that when we look at why we're having this 46% increase predicted to come about in the next five years, 56% of the increase is attributed to the McGuinty government green energy experiments. I call them the "buy high, sell low" plan, where they buy rooftop solar for 80 cents a kilowatt hour when the market price for electricity is around five, six, seven cents a kilowatt hour. The cost of that gets spread amongst all the ratepayers. We all end up paying eventually, and that's why we're seeing that hydro bills are going to go up 46% and that 56% of that is attributable to the green energy experiments of this government.

You even look at—you know, they're giving 10% back, but how are they paying for it? The government has increased spending dramatically the last number of years, over 70% since they came into power. The budget was about \$70 billion; they're now spending, this year, \$126 billion, taking in record revenues of \$107 billion, but spending substantially above that. We had almost a \$20-billion deficit; it's somewhere around \$19 billion this year. They don't have the money to actually give this 10% reduction in hydro rates, so they're going to borrow it. They're going to add another \$1.1 billion per year, over five years, to pay for this 10% reduction.

Who pays for this? Guess what? We all pay for it, with interest. Sure, they're going to give it back on your hydro bill, but then you're going to pay with future taxes—and our kids and their kids are going to end up paying—for this \$1-billion, 10% reduction in future taxes. The problem with this government is that they just haven't shown any real restraint, so they continue to spend and spend and spend, and as a result, they've been giving away irresponsible settlements, despite having this \$20-billion deficit. There's a big, deep hole, and now they're panicking and coming out with various different bills; it seems like one a month to try to curry favour with voters.

It's also interesting that as they learn that people are really upset when they open their hydro bill and are shocked to see just how much they're going to pay for it, the government is saying, "Well, what are we going to do

about that?" They have a whole strategy. We were lucky to have somebody give us the strategy, Renewable Energy Matters—Campaign Outline from the Sussex consultant, that outlined the government's strategy. Everybody's bill is going up, and people can figure it out when they open their hydro bill and are shocked to look at it. A lot of it, as I said, is attributable to the green energy experiments. So what is the government's strategy, as given to them from Sussex?

1520

Well, on page 2 of their strategy, which we happen to have a copy of, "As renewable energy is also anticipated to be a wedge issue in the election, with the PCs supporting a move away from renewables"—well, that's not true, but that's what they're trying to portray—"this effort should consolidate industry and non-industry stakeholders in rallying support for a continued focus on green power as important economic, social, and energy policy in Ontario.

"In this, it will be critical to 'confuse' the issue in the political/public/media away from just price to include key value attributes such as jobs, clean air, farm income, etc. Renewables cannot be defined by price alone."

It's funny, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Finance, his responses to questions—that is his response. So he's obviously following this script dictated by the Sussex group to a T. When you go to page 7 of their "Strategic/Tactical/Logistical Considerations," it shows they are working with the government, because it states right in point number 1:

"Core messaging—Framing around jobs/investment, farm income, and environment/human health. Research needs to support this, and should be coordinated with" the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and the Ontario Power Authority—so, obviously, working closely with the government to implement this strategy to confuse the public so they won't just look at their hydro bill and blame the government; they will try to think that there are other wonderful things going on. So that is in effect the policy.

We're still waiting for that long-term energy plan from this government. Instead, each week we seem to get these seat-of-the-pants announcements. Apparently there is maybe one coming this week, but so far it has been a long time without a plan, and that's part of the reason we are seeing these huge increases in bills, and some of the basic core problems of identifying how they are going to supply baseload power, like dealing with nuclear power, which supplies about 50% of the power in the province that the government has not dealt with. They made many promises to shut down coal-fired generation. The only generating station that closed completely, Lakeview, was actually announced by past PC minister Elizabeth Witmer. That's a promise they made several times.

I will conclude by saying that we are supporting Bill 109, an act to amend the Taxation Act to do with the Ontario energy and property tax credit. It's a very minor break for seniors and property owners. We await a plan for the government to get its spending under control and

for it to come up with more substantive long-term plans for energy, which is so important to the economy of this province. So thank you, Madame Speaker. It was my pleasure to have had an opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very thankful that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has given me the opportunity to follow him, because he does set a very informed case on the debate. I think he said it all in his last remarks. He said that we are waiting for a long-term plan. That's kind of what this debate is about, technically, in the broadest sense; it summarizes. Madam Speaker, you would know; you are participating in the debates here each day or listening. This is probably the third or fourth swipe at the energy-smart, or not-so-smart, process in terms of what it does to the consumer.

It makes me think back to George Smitherman when he was the Minister of Energy. He took quite a spanking here in public just recently. I think a lot of it had to do with his misjudging that the people of Ontario were actually listening. The genesis of this defective plan starts—and I think, in fairness, it started with George Smitherman in Bill 150, the Green Energy Act. We're all for green energy, clean energy. They forgot the affordable energy piece. That's what happened here. They went right out of control and they just jumped right off the top of the mountain and landed where they've been hurt ever since, really.

When I look at that bill, the most devastating infection in the bill was the whole issue of feed-in tariffs. Even there, they screwed that up—or messed that up, pardon me—by saying that they had, first of all, 80.2 cents per kilowatt hour for small-scale solar operations. Then they cancelled it, after people had invested in it, and then they brought it back in. They haven't landed squarely on this issue. It has been in turmoil every single day. In fairness, our leader, Tim Hudak, has told us that this is a plan that has no plan attached to it; it's just a statement.

It's so bad that George Smitherman resigned. He knew that it was poison. He probably was in touch with a lot of people saying, "George, you got it wrong." So finally, he ran for mayor of the city of Toronto and the people followed him and fired him there, too. He'll probably be back in the federal seat—I think that there will be some changes there—but he knew enough to quit.

I'm asking the Premier today, does he know enough to quit? Gordon Campbell did.

Here's the key: It's not surprising that he's under some stress; he wasn't here today—and I shouldn't say that, so I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I would caution the member.

Mr. John O'Toole: But the point is, I look around and the evidence is clear. Today's question period—in fairness, the leader of the NDP has been all over this like a spider web, really. They've ignited the people of Ontario, following the lead of our critic John Yakabuski as well. We were first to ignite the flame, and they've

just sort of carried it around for us. But it's clearly burning their house down.

This is one more example. Bill 109—I've spoken on this before, a couple of times, actually. I'm looking at it. I spoke on October 5 and on October 16, so if people want to refer back to Hansard, you can search it on Google and get much of what I have to say.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka brought some fresh energy to the debate, because it was part of the most recent fiscal update last week. They brought in some more changes.

The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has read the notes they gave her almost perfectly. There wasn't even a pronunciation error, because they're almost identical. It's standing up for things that don't stand up to the test.

But if I look back, not just on Bill 109—I'm going to look back a bit here. This bill here was first introduced on September 28. Just prior to that, they knew they had it wrong, because Bill 150, as I said, was completely out of order, the way it was given birth to at the time.

There was a bill just around that time that was called An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the children's activity tax credit.

This is the second part of the debate—you have to kind of follow along here—the first part being Bill 150. The second part is the—let's hear it now—HST. That made it even worse. Bill 150 and paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour—now slap 13% tax on the bill, and then you've got the tariff being fed in more expensively and some bailout money for the utilities, because a lot of the consumers in their base were complaining that they put out information with respect to people who couldn't pay their bills. They were getting ready for the winter onslaught of bills where people would be in default, perhaps, and disconnect charges then come in.

I listened to my riding and I knew, just by listening to my constituents—not politics. My constituents were telling me every single day—we track every call in our riding office, and I thank my riding office for the great work they do. We're the intake, we're the voice for the constituents. They call us, and we bring it up here in the Legislature. I'm going to mention some of them, because I've asked them if I could use their names.

The next bill that also started to give us some confidence—our leader, Tim Hudak, said to watch it, that they've fallen off the cliff on this thing—was Bill 122. Although it may not seem to be connected, it is. The auditor made some comments—An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector.

This is important because, in the budget sense, they're realizing that in the electricity file, they have created a monster bureaucracy, big time, under the OPA, the Ontario Power Authority, and a number of other organizations. The IESO would be another one. There's probably about 100-plus people in each organization all making over \$100,000 a year, some over \$500,000. It's quite shocking, actually; that's not a pun or a play on words. In the whole electricity sector, there are a lot of oppor-

tunities being taken by the consultant groups, which have been spoken about in this House, and that's kind of in the consultations there.

1530

Again, as I said last week, another bill basically dealing with the same thing: Bill 135. This was a budget act. That's where they gave you the flat 10% reduction in your electricity bill.

Let's examine that 10% reduction a bit. Let's say your bill was \$100; on that, there would of course be the tax on the tax. There would be the delivery charge, the debt retirement charge—all that has been questioned here in the House, too, recently; this file is a complete mess—the \$7.8 billion that they've collected but they haven't paid it off against the stranded debt.

But if you took a bill of \$100—I'd ask the customers to look at their bill carefully. Watch it and call any of your MPPs, especially if they're Liberal members, because they're not listening. They're not acting like there's any problem on this file. About 60% of your bill at home is probably delivery charges, debt retirement, line loss charges—all these things. Very little of it is the electrons you use; the electrons are about 40% of the bill.

They talk about conservation. I fully endorse it. In fact, I don't think they're spending enough time on conservation.

But if you take your entire bill, the debt retirement, line loss—all those are basically a tax. So what they're doing is—you lump it all up, and the bill is now \$100. It's probably more like \$1,000, but we'll go with the easy numbers—\$100. On that, there's going to be a tax, the 13% tax, so it's \$113 now. They're going to give you back 10% starting next year sometime.

Mr. Jeff Leal: January 1.

Mr. John O'Toole: It'll start next year sometime. You can't trust them. There'll be another bill. I'm sure there'll be another bill. Just watch out.

They've said this temporarily. Now, what this does is—you take the 10% off, and that gives you about \$11, but you've paid \$13 in tax. They're paying you back with your own money. That's exactly what's happening. Don't let this shell game confuse the customer.

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, I think, tried to bring some light to the fact that there is a strategy. I shouldn't disclose this here. There is a strategy, and there's a group that has written a report for them.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. I have it somewhere. Somebody may have stolen it. Lock the doors; I think somebody stole it.

Anyway, I think that strategy is by the group, but I'll find it as I go through my notes here.

The strategy is to try to confuse the consumers. I'm not going to criticize one of these strategy groups. They probably did it in the quiet for Premier McGuinty, Dwight and all the other people over there, because that strategy is to say, "Look, we've gone off the cliff on this thing. We need to confuse the consumer, the customer." Can you imagine having a strategy to confuse the people of Ontario? Oh, it's so cynical. Holy smokes—all this

stuff showing up on your bill. The debt retirement charge has accumulated, the debt interest payments and all these various things.

The smart meter, it turns out, is really a cash register.

Let's pay attention. I think the best—without me trying to make this up as I go along, what I'm going to do is I'm going to stick to the clippings today. All members are given this each day. It's mandatory reading. I'm just going to go through the weekend here to see what it says. "HST Fuelling Hydro Hikes..."—that's the first headline. I'm just going to read them. "Clean, Reliable Power Costs Money"—yes. Why didn't they think of that before these bills? Anyway, there's another one here. What does it say here? "Climate of Confusion." I'm not making this up. This one here is from the National Post: "Ontario's plan for green energy conversion has left companies in the dark." Wait a minute here. This is a two-pager; it's a big one. It's very complicated as well. It talks about the feed-in tariff.

Let's just turn the page. These are sequentially in the clippings today. One is, "Ontario's Powerful Sleight of Hand." That's an unparliamentary term, actually. And this one here is talking about clean energy benefits and the 10% reduction. This is the top-of-mind issue; cabinet office is scrambling now. They're working day and night trying to figure this thing out. It's off the rails. It is chaos. In fact, they're going over the cliff.

Here's another one: "Deregulation Has Led to Hydro Hikes"—surprise. Now, here's the issue. If Premier McGuinty is so intelligent—he always told the people of Ontario, "We're bringing in the smart meter because we knows what's right for you. You don't know what you're talking about." That's what he's basically saying, in code language. If he's so good, how come they've screwed this up so badly? I think the consumers are right. I have a list of people who have given me their names—and I'm going to use them shortly here, because I've only got half an hour left. I've already started. But this regulation has led to hydro hikes. I'm not making these up. The member from Peterborough, get your clippings out; read them.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He's reading them too. I'm sure his wife's not saying—I can imagine.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's an \$8.17 difference—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Peterborough.

Mr. John O'Toole: Here's another one: "Say No to Green Energy Sold at the Door." This is written by the Toronto Star, a very friendly, some would say biased, media outlet for the Liberal Party.

The next one here—I'm just reading these. "They've Put a Price on Human Life." Now, that was a question asked by the member from Whitby–Oshawa today, and I think the Minister of Health was struck. I hope she actually moves, but being struck by lightning is another thing.

Another topic here is "Mind-Body Disconnect." I'm not sure that's related to this energy file. It could easily be, though. "Emergency Room Waits Putting Patients at Risk." This is talking about 32 hours in the—you know,

you're paying all these taxes, the debt has doubled, and now you have to wait 32 hours in emergency in Ontario. You pay more and get less. That's the message. I'm not making this up; I'm reading, Madame Speaker, respectfully. "Time for Change" is the headline there. It sounds like Barack Obama made that one up. Anyway, "Political Storms a Good Sign." Well, there is a political storm. They're falling off the cliff. It says here, under "Political Storms a Good Sign:

"We'll see if next year's provincial election in Ontario will be Dalton McGuinty's Lorena Bobbitt moment. But the knives appear sharpened.

"The storm's strongest winds, however, right now are centred on Quebec...." Charest is the lowest in the poll; Premier McGuinty might be next. He's a nice fellow. Look, I didn't say anything negative. It's just that he's made a lot of bad, bad choices. You know, when a person gets hooked on spending money carelessly—billion-dollar boondoggles, hiring Samsung to solve our electricity problems—hello, we don't need Korea; we've got universities here, centres of excellence. It just upsets me so badly.

"Three Protesters Shut Me Down," "Idiot Mob Mentality"—I don't know what that one's about. It's a good article, actually. "How Do You Put a Price on Learning?" The price on you, the consumer, today is electricity, health care, money to foreign—I can't think of one thing they're doing right, really. The eco tax: Let's talk about that one. There's a good article in here. I'll read that too. Some companies have it buried in the products; some don't. The solution to the eco tax was actually working with industry to reduce the toxins or hazardous materials at the source, not taxing it. That doesn't get rid of them; that just gets money in the Premier's pocket. We want to solve the problem. They have no plan that I can see.

Okay, that's another one on insurance; that's not particularly relevant here. "Going for Broke"—that's another really good, interesting article. I won't go into too much detail on that one, but it does talk about the potential things that are on the block. My advice here is there has been some stuff in the media—Premier McGuinty considering selling Niagara Falls. I would hope that he never sells Niagara Falls. This is a cherished landmark. Think back to your history, now: Adam Beck, founder of electricity, Conservative government, power at cost, public power—things you can trust. That's what I'm talking about.

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There's another Liberal idea in here; it's really good. They like looking wherever they can get money out of your pockets. This one here is, "Why Not Bring Back Photo Radar?" The Liberal member introduced that bill today. It's just another one.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Peterborough said it's a good idea. What that was was getting money out of your pocket, and—

Mr. Jeff Leal: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I never said that, and I hope the member from Durham would retract that statement, because it's not correct.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Okay, thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: If the member from Peterborough didn't say it, it might have been the minister of whatever. However—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Great retraction.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I retract. The member from Peterborough didn't say it, but he probably would like to have said it or been first to say it.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It's not a point of order, but you can only speculate on—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Okay. I think it was the member from Don Valley East. Don Valley East said it. They can deny and deny and deny all they want. It was said by a Liberal member, respectfully, Madam Speaker—another tax grab.

Smart meters—oh, I don't know.

"Can the Environment Help Save the Economy?" Good article. I'd encourage people to read that one too. Researchers believe the environment will be one of the biggest industries—and I can say it is. In fact, right now, I would say, all of us—our leader has a very important policy position on the environment. We brought in the Oak Ridges Moraine Protection Act, the largest national park formation in all of Canada. We were the lead in that whole thing. We were the first to actually close a coal plant. Elizabeth Witmer closed the Lakeview plant. They promised in 2003 to close the coal plants. They haven't closed one, not one. In fact, they're tuning up Nanticoke and the other plants—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Lambton.

Mr. John O'Toole: —Lambton etc., to burn a form of coal, biowaste, garbage—not garbage. But they're not closing them.

Not only that, but if I look at my riding of Durham, we have clean, reliable, safe nuclear plants that have been feeding 50% of Ontario's baseload for years at Pickering and Darlington and Bruce. They have failed to make a long-term commitment on safe, reliable—it's environmentally friendly. It's good for the environment. It meets Kyoto emissions.

What's all this flirting around with energy that costs 80 cents a kilowatt hour? I always like to remind my customers, consumers—I'm actually their customer. I work for my constituents in Durham, because Durham is a leading area. Our universities all focused on safe, reliable, affordable technology and energy: geothermal; power from hydrogen. There's so much going on at our universities. I could spend most—I don't have enough time here to say much more than that. I can only say that we are a leader in energy and will be and should be. I hope they're being included in some of the discussions in the long-range plan from Premier McGuinty. We certainly will be working with them, if given the privilege of running the province.

At least being honest with the people of the province of Ontario—that's the most important thing. People who try to trivialize, dismiss, who don't listen effectively to

what the people are saying—we're hearing it, on almost every file. I'm not making this up. These are the clippings. I'm going to go on here and I'm going to—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I'm just going to use my own clippings here. This is today's clippings, for the people of Ontario. All members get them. It's not that we're clever; it's just we're asked to read them. Some of them do; some don't even read them. But anyway, here's the first one. The first headline is "Off-peak Electricity Rates to Start Earlier." This is a very important one too. This is another admission that they got it wrong.

Smart meters: They spent about probably \$400 million or \$500 million setting up this system to transmit power to all the utilities. Veridian and Hydro One get this data from the user electronically into their billing system. The billing system calculates how much, and when they used it. That's why they're not smart meters; they're time-of-use meters. They figured, when people weren't sleeping, make the price high; when people were sleeping, make the price low. The regular price is about five to six cents per kilowatt hour. The peak price is about 10. And when is the peak price? When you get up, have a shower and make your breakfast, or when the kids come home from school and you're doing the dishes and getting the bath ready and all that stuff, washing the clothes. When it's off-peak is when you're asleep.

One day in Ottawa a couple of weeks ago, the Premier was questioned on this rather skilful, stiletto way of collecting money when people were awake. He said, "Why don't they do their washing on the weekend?" Instead of taking your kids to soccer or activities, put them on the couch, let them watch Nintendo or Game Boy or something. Get them out of the house? Be with the family. Family time—doing the laundry. I'm sure the Premier's doing his laundry. He probably sends it to the cleaners.

Anyway, Liberals stretch the off-peak period. Here's what this does. This doesn't change it. This does not change it. I'm going to read it for you, because it's worth it. This article is non-partisan—it's written by the Star.

Interjection: No.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Liberal briefing notes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's not non-partisan.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it is. It says here that they will not drop till May. That's just before the election. How cynical is that? Isn't that ridiculous? You can't—that's the thing here.

It says right here in the article:

"It'll be cold comfort for everyone coming home to cook supper and bathe the kids'...."

"They are trying to pull any kind of a rabbit out of the hat," he said of the government...."

Right now, Bill 135, which is another bill—they're going to take 10% off the bottom line of your bill. I explained that earlier. If it's \$100, it's \$113 actually because of the tax, and they're going to give you back \$10. So they're really still making three bucks off you. What they're saying here is that they're going to switch

the time-of-use price, while the fixed charges—the debt retirement, the tax, the line loss and all that stuff—are not being reduced. What they're doing is, the time of use, which is the electrons part of the bill—which, as I said, is 40% of the bill. So with the smallest part of the bill, really, they're going to give you a change in the rate. The change in the rate is going to be a couple of hours. They're not changing it; they're going to start it later. I hope your kids go to bed early, because otherwise it's still going to cost you a lot.

Here's the next headline. I'm not making this up. It's important. Sometimes we get accused of being too critical or too cynical with the Premier. This one here says, "Preem"—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: How disrespectful.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is the Sun: "Preem Smartens Up on Hydro Rates." It's true. Everybody's talking about it. How could he have missed this one? Some of those consultants he's paying a million dollars a month to—that's what they spend in consultants, a million dollars a month. Isn't that shameful? It's money out of the people's pockets. These pages here should be talking to their parents and asking them if they know how much they're spending a month in consultants. It's absolutely discouraging. Meanwhile, your parents are trying to save for your university education.

The Toronto Sun article goes on: "Time-of-use customers—who pay three different rates for electricity depending on when they use it—have been charged mid-peak rates 5 p.m.-9 p.m. during the months of May to October."

Now I know, too, that in this bill here, Bill 109, the cost per year, according to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, is \$1.3 billion in annual support. The 10% cut is \$1 billion a year as well. Where are they going to get the money? This starts to get confusing. It's part of that strategy—where is that strategy paper? I've got to find that strategy paper. You could maybe get up and look, Bob. The only thing is, the strategy to confuse people is actually—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Never mind. It doesn't matter. I don't need it. I've probably read it five or six times anyway.

My point being that it's clear now that they are using the strategy group's confuse, dither and delay strategy or tactic. They are. I've come to realize that there's \$2 billion now—it's two different bills, of course, Bill 135, which is the budget bill or the fiscal update bill, and Bill 109—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Never mind. These are all carefully arranged so that I can't lose them.

1550

With Bill 109, the interesting part here is that it's \$1.3 billion. They have a deficit right now, about \$18.5 billion. Now, the reason it's only \$18.5 billion is that they sold Teranet, which is the property of the Ontario land registry system—electronically. They sold the use of that

system, Teranet, for \$1 billion. Some of the members on the other side don't understand it, really. It's unfortunate they don't. But here's the deal: It's a 50-year contract. That won't even exist in 50 years. They bring the \$1 billion into income—it shows as revenue this year—so that the deficit isn't as big—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no, the member there from Northumberland, the member for Peterborough should be quiet. They'll have their time. I'm looking forward to your responses. I'll be making notes on that too. I know you're touchy on this because it's a subject you're weak on.

But anyway, the whole point is that there is \$2.5 billion in commitment here when they already have an operating deficit. It's really important you learn this. The budget is about \$107 billion, roughly, and the deficit is \$20 billion. Now that's 20%; they are spending 20% more than they're earning. This is a double-edged sword. Here's the problem: The \$20 billion each year goes into the debt. Well, they've doubled the debt in less than seven years. They've doubled it. It looks fine now. It's like the mortgage fraud thing that went on in the States. The debt now is manageable because interest on that debt is about 1.3%. What if the interest goes to 5%? They're bankrupt.

This reminds me of when Premier Bob Rae, now Liberal Bob Rae, was in government and they brought in the social contract. I was the chair of finance in the region of Durham at the time, the municipality. They had what they called the expenditure reduction plan—you probably remember that as well—prior to the social contract. What it was is, they were asking municipalities—the member from Scarborough–Pickering would know. He was the mayor of Pickering at the time and a very good mayor. I'm surprised he didn't stay. But anyway, the fact is he's not in cabinet here. He should be. I will say that he should be because I saw his leadership in Pickering.

Here's the key, though: That whole issue and episode here to me is that they've really got the plan wrong, and they did back then. The expenditure reduction plan was basically to lay people off. That's what it was. That's really what it does. The issue was at the time—if you look at provincial spending or any public sector spending, about 75% of the operating budget, is payroll—75%.

Mr. Rinaldi was also a mayor, and the member from Peterborough was a long-serving Peterborough councillor who I'm sure served many budgets. We're all going through that. So the whole public sector, the MUSH sector—municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals—all spend a considerable amount of money. The province of Ontario itself, its own-purpose spending, is much smaller than the MUSH sector. The MUSH sector spends most of the money. It's all payroll. There's nothing wrong with that. I respect the services.

But when the economy is going in the tank, over the cliff, which it is, you've got to make—cut a tree down, apply knowledge and skills to it, make it into a table or

computer desk; that's called a value-added economy. But service-sector economies do not create wealth. They create quality of life and they spend money. That's what they do. It's very important that you have good judges, good professors, good nurses, good doctors, good teachers, good professional people. But when the economy is going over the cliff—and if you look around, this is not new.

Ireland was called the Celtic Tiger; Greece—they're all going over the cliff. Portugal is next; Spain. Europe is in chaos and we're following on many of the same suggestions. They keep citing, "Look what they're doing in Europe." I look around the world and I say, "Okay, Denmark is highly regarded, environmentally friendly, clean, with a good social and moral fabric. What do they pay for electricity in Denmark?" So I looked it up.

Interjection: How much, John?

Mr. John O'Toole: Thirty-four cents a kilowatt hour. Well, it better be clean. And it's a good way to promote conservation because it's so expensive you can't afford it. The people who are on the bottom rung of the income ladder are getting killed—shivering in the dark. Older people will be shivering in the dark. Premier, you're on the wrong road.

This tax credit, this Bill 109, is something we support. Our critic, Mr. Miller, said that; I've said it. I've said it twice and I'm going to say it again today. But it's an admission that they've gone too far, too fast, on this whole energy file and the taxing. Seniors are being taxed out of their very homes. I feel I've got to put these people's names on the record.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Put them on the record.

Mr. John O'Toole: They are. They're my constituents who have clearly given me permission, and I'm going to.

I'm going to read—why couldn't I get more time to speak on this? Here's the other point: I'm going to mention the names first for Hansard: Peter Box, who is intelligent and well informed. He lives in an apartment with his wife, retired—I would say a British fellow, very meticulous. When he writes me emails, I pay attention. In fact, I credit him with a lot of the—and I would suggest that he may not be a supporter, but he does know that I stand up for him—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't care if he supports me, really, as long as he's paying attention. All of us should pay attention to our constituents.

Russell Branch is another effective, well-informed—he may be a veteran, I think. Bob Beamish, Alan Bickell, Loran and Betty Pascoe, Margaret Seed. I have copies of their handwritten—with your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I'm going to read some of them, out of respect for the time they took not just to quickly flip you an email from a distribution list, as some of them do, as you know. We all get these—500 people get it, including you, and they expect you to fix it. I know you're effective, too, in your riding. I've heard you speak about it.

This is from Mr. Branch: "I have just got my hydro bill. It is about the same for two months as it was for

three.” So that means it has gone up by 30%—the same for two months as it was for three. “I will admit that we have never used the air conditioner as much as the last two months. What I object to is there is no current reading and previous reading. Are we supposed to take Veridian’s word on how much we use with no way of checking our meter? I think that the last two months of hot weather prove my theory that something must be done about the HST for old people who are home all day, or people with disabilities who must use their air conditioner.

“We try to conserve and according to this article we will have to pay for less usage” they can’t afford.

Russell Branch has it right. You’re going to use less and you’re going to pay more. That’s a double-edged sword. Whack ’em and stack ’em; that’s what that is.

As far as I’m concerned, he has written me a couple of letters that are all—it’s clear that he’s informed, involved and aware of what’s being done to him. He feels powerless to do anything about it, and he’s a senior. I believe he served our country; if not, he has served our community.

He was responding to an article here that says, “Toronto Hydro Seeks 18% Residential Rate Hike.” Wait a minute; where’s it going to stop?

I asked the Premier today: When is it going to stop? Please, take your foot off people’s chests. They’re having difficulty breathing.

Some of them are—

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: Some of them become engaged when I start pointing out these facts. They’re trying to get me to stop reading them. These are my constituents, and this is another one from Peter Box and his wife, Christine: “New electricity rates (TOU) combined with HST.” That’s the topic; this is an email. Thank you very much, Peter, for this one. I do have his permission as well. “I really do thank you for your call yesterday and your attempt to show concern over the plight of seniors.” I at least said, “Look, I feel sorry.” I didn’t say I was going to fix it. I would say that Premier McGuinty is the government. He has the keys to the truck. Get in it and get driving. Get her out of the ditch. “Please take”—this is from Peter now—

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: Don’t interrupt Peter, please. You can interrupt me; that’s different.

“Please take my following comments in the spirit in which they are offered—no malice, no bad criticism just honest-to-goodness comments on the scene as I see it.

“I do wish that I had made a recording of our discussion to play back to you and show where I was correct in my original assessment of politicians. I lost count of the times you tried to change the topic (either on purpose or without thinking I can’t tell).” I wasn’t trying to obfuscate, unlike what happens here regularly. He asked one question; he had another answer. Or you ask what time it is, and they make you a watch. “But you showed a great reluctance to keep to the topic that was the subject of my

endeavours since day 1. You showed, as I said, a reluctance to talk of seniors and their problems to the effect that I now doubt that these subjects have been brought up at any of your caucus meetings, and if they have, to no conclusion.... Even though you state that you are a senior, you showed a drastic lack of insight into the plight of seniors in apartments paying their own hydro—to the point where I might have to slot you in the same envelope as Matthew Hellin (you know him) who, I quote, said, ‘I cannot put myself in your position.’

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“Below you will find a summarization of my main points as laid out to Matt (no specific response, as usual).

“As to your suggestion re getting involved on the local senior scene—unless you have a death wish, you don’t want me that close.”

Anyway, he makes a point that seniors are struggling, and he’s made it several times.

Margaret Seed says many of the same things, as well as Loran Pascoe.

“As a retired pensioner, we pay \$263 a month, 12 months a year, for our hydro, as our house is heated by electric. With the 8% increase in July and the additional cost of the smart meter, plus the increase that Hydro is looking for in the fall, how are we or any seniors going to afford that. Something has to be done....

“Also, I read in the paper that our local councillor ... received something ... to go to [a] meeting at Veridian, plus in total she received \$119,727 for a part-time job. What gives?

“Thanks for your time,

“Loran and Betty Pasco.”

I will only say that these people are concerned; that’s the point.

Now, in fairness, the Premier has admitted it, but two wrongs don’t make a right. They have this file so messed up that it’s been the subject of question period almost this whole session; you know that as well. Our leader, Tim Hudak, and our critic, John Yakabuski, have tried to reach out to various stakeholders—seniors and others—and to speak to the issue of conservation, giving consumers the right tools at the right time to be able to affect the outcomes of their bill; and to have a choice of whether you want a smart meter or some other plan. These are options for people that they want. And they’re different; there isn’t a one-size-fits-all. The point that Mr. Box and others were making is that seniors are home a good part of the day, when the government assumes that the smart meter price during the afternoon would be lower. They leave it up. Why wouldn’t they lower it? Why wouldn’t they have a tax credit for seniors? That’s exactly what’s happened. So this group, Peter Box, Russell Branch, Bob Beamish, Alan Bickell, Loran and Betty Pascoe, and Margaret Seed, should be very, very satisfied that they have actually effected change here at Queen’s Park.

Now, I would like to think that it was because of their advocacy that I was allowed to speak on their behalf; I am their representative; and that our leader, Tim Hudak,

has forced this issue, to the extent that—in fairness, the NDP as well have done a commendable job in saying that one of the Premier's options could be to take the HST off the electricity bill. The fact is—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, Madam Speaker, they're barracking again. In fact, they're not. I'm going back to Electricity 101. If your bill is \$100, that means you're going to pay \$113. What they're going to do is give you 10% back. Let's do the numbers here: 10% of \$110 is \$11. You've collected \$13, so they're still making money on the backs of seniors. They're trying to do the shell game thing here. It's simply unfair.

It's part of the strategy that was introduced here that I've been looking for all afternoon; somebody stole it on me. What's the name of that group?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Sussex Strategy.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Sussex group—the Sussex Strategy Group. They were probably paid thousands and thousands of dollars, and they came up with this obfuscation plan, how to skate around the issue, how to talk about debt retirement charge, stranded debt, line loss and all these—Madam Speaker, look at your bill. If it was \$75 last month and it's \$100 this month, then you're paying more. That's what the strategy was: to confuse, delay, dither and deny. The new strategy of the Liberal government: Collect as much as you can.

Even the HST, in fairness, is part of the problem with this bill. When they implemented the HST, they tried to slip in the eco tax. They got caught on that one and the consumers would not stand for paying more eco tax than the cost of the battery that they were buying. Here's the deal: They kind of backed off on that, but I don't believe it's gone. I think I read the words "for now." The election's in October 2011. Stay tuned, because I think it's putting pressure on the government to do the right thing is the right thing. The right thing is the right politics, too; the right policy is the right politics. That's what I feel is being ignored, the right policy and the right politics. I believe our leader, Tim Hudak, has got a plan; I'm aware of some of it. The people of Ontario will get their chance.

Here's the deal: Don't promise more than you can deliver. Be straightforward with people. Tell them the motive all the time of why these changes are necessary. We support conservation. We support clean energy. They say that we're for the coal plants and all that stuff—no, no. Coal plants have been here for hundreds of years; it was the baseload in Britain and all over the world. If you swallow that, you're being misled.

We closed the only coal plants that have ever been closed. We've closed the only coal plants—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: The member in his zeal appears to have strayed into unparliamentary language: "misled."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Would the member retract "misled," please?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I withdraw that comment if it offended the member from Mississauga South—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He's not Mississauga South; he's Mississauga-Erindale.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mississauga-Erindale? Well, there you go. I didn't know who he was, actually.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Try again.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Streetsville?

Mr. John O'Toole: Look, he's a well-intended member and he's trying to deflect.

If I use language—in many cases, I was using language that I've read in the paper here recently. You weren't here; most of the afternoon you haven't been here, actually.

But the real point I'm trying to make, though, is that when you're looking at policy in this kind of debate, where this is kind of—I'm trying to sum it up. Madam Speaker, I may have to seek unanimous consent for more time, because my arguments haven't been completely established. But we'll wait.

Here's the deal, though. I was thinking that if we have—

Interjections.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Actually, I know they're upset. They're worried. I understand that. The poll today is a good example of that.

Here's the issue, though: If they wanted to get this right, they would admit that they've made three critical errors. One is that they would have to recognize that the HST implementation plan was simply wrong; it failed. Bill 150, the Green Energy Act, failed. The smart meter implementation failed. They have backtracked on every single one of those policy announcements. And backtracking is becoming their predictable behaviour when cornered, much like a scared little mouse or other creature of that breed.

We think that good policy is good politics, and often the truth will always be the best policy. The promises they've made on certain things have proven that people have been paying attention for seven years and are now less trustworthy of a once decent—I don't know. The Premier seems to have lost his way. This is what I feel. Personally, I know how hard it must be when you're spending more money than you're earning. You're maxing out the credit card, it will soon affect your credit rating, and if the interest rate ever goes up, you're going to have a serious problem. You're going to have to sell the house. I hope they don't sell Niagara Falls, though. I think that of all the things that they could do, this would be the most problematic. It's symbolic to the whole energy file that Sir Adam Beck started.

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I think if you look at Gordon Campbell as an example, who just recently resigned, unfortunately, he did not tax gasoline on the HST. When they went in on the HST, there were no exemptions, even though they were allowed. Then they signed the agreement with a poison pill provision, which means they got \$4.3 billion from Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Harper to implement. They knew that it was going to be expensive to implement the HST, and rather than use it to offset certain things, they didn't. They are going to give you three cheques to try to buy

you off, in a way, with your own money again, because that's federal tax.

Gordon Campbell also had to—you know, they're going to be voted out of office because of the HST in British Columbia. I would say that in Ontario, there could probably be consequences for some of the policies and decisions they've made in the last while.

In conclusion, I would seek unanimous consent for a little bit more time to wrap up my remarks. I seek unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member has moved unanimous consent to extend his time. Is it the pleasure of the House—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Motion defeated.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I would have gladly listened to the member from Durham for a longer time, because when I listen to him, it is sort of this ongoing stream of consciousness. Just as the ideas come to him, he expounds upon them. It's always a pleasure to listen to him. He said so many things in the course of his 50 minutes or so that it's hard to know where to start, given a minute and a half.

I want to thank him for the kudos that he gave to the leader of the NDP early on in his speech for carrying the issue in the House and around the province. In fact, he is absolutely correct that the editorial opinion has been near unanimous on the position she has taken and our party has taken around this issue, especially around taking the HST off hydro. It has got far more editorial support and far more support from writers of news columns than anything the government has attempted to do.

In terms of what this government is doing and what he described at some length—and I think we all have to agree with him—it's that this government has attempted to literally plug the holes in a leaking dike. As they have come up with these policy solutions that aren't working, they very quickly discover, to their chagrin, that they're not being bought out there. So they're plugging the holes in a leaking dike as the complaints come and the complaints come, and this is but one of the very recent ones, where people who are seniors and people on fixed incomes have complained bitterly about how this is going to cost them a lot of money and how life is much more difficult for them today than it was in past. Hence, we have this bill to try to assuage those few fears that they have and to try to buy the government some time. The member from Durham is absolutely right when he talks about that.

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

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's a pleasure do a two-minute response to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, as well as the member from Durham. I always enjoy hearing the finance critic, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I get to work closely with him, as the PA to finance. The member from Durham—well, it was loquacious, to say the least. As the member from

Beaches–East York said, it was stream of consciousness; we'll give you that.

The criticism—you know, we heard a lot of this loquaciousness, and at the end what I heard the member say was that the Progressive Conservative caucus will be supporting Bill 109, which is the right thing to do, and the criticism was insipid at best.

I think what we need to do is hear from the people of Ontario who will be benefiting from the Ontario energy and property tax credit, and I want to share with you what John Thompson says, the chair of CARP for chapter 25 in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, serving Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich townships, as well as all of Kitchener–Waterloo. John says, "In my opinion, the Ontario energy and property tax credit increase for seniors is a very positive, progressive and compassionate strategy to assist Ontario seniors, many who are on fixed incomes. A tax break for the necessities of life—shelter and energy—will provide additional personal resources for seniors to enhance their quality of life in other discretionary aspects of their personal budgets."

This credit for seniors is "a wise decision to assist those who have, over their adult lives, contributed so much to the prosperity of the province of Ontario." We thank John Thompson for that.

I'll just leave you with a comment from a woman named Millie who is 87 years old. I met her at the OEPTC announcement in my riding and she grabbed my hand and said, "Leeanna, thank you for this credit. Whatever the numbers are, what I need you to know is that for me in my home, this is priceless."

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Various people have said various things about the comments that were made, particularly by my colleague the member from Durham, from "stream of consciousness" to "loquacious" and various other comments.

The fact of the matter is that there is a thread of truth that has gone through all of the comments that he's made this afternoon when he has been able to go through today's press clippings and the press clippings from the weekend. There are of course many issues that are related to energy, but even some of the ones that weren't directly related all come back to it, because it is such a huge issue for the province of Ontario. It's been so badly mismanaged by this government that the chickens are coming home to roost in different areas, not just in the energy bills that are rising, but with respect to the increasing pressures on our health care system and the fact that we can't move forward because we're going to be saddled with all of this debt with post-secondary, primary and secondary education.

All of these themes relate to the energy file because they relate not just to the price of energy for internal consumers in the province of Ontario, but also to how we are going to be able to attract businesses to locate in this province, to start businesses, to start employing people, to start creating the revenues that we really need so that we're going to be able to pay off this billion-dollar debt

that they're creating for us by this reduction in energy bills right now.

What we really need is a balanced, comprehensive energy plan. We haven't seen it from this government to date. We keep hearing about it and we're ever hopeful, but really, based on what we've seen so far, I'm not going to be holding my breath, to put it that way.

We need to provide relief to people in a real way in the province of Ontario, and the way that this government is going about doing it with this piece of legislation—by taking away from one hand and then taking away with the other hand, by taking away the previous \$900 property tax credit and now replacing it with a \$700 plus a \$200 energy credit—really doesn't get people any further ahead.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to say that the member from Durham is one of the few people in this chamber who can speak at length in the fashion that he speaks in. I appreciate the fact that whichever English teacher he had who introduced him to James Joyce and Ulysses has made a great contribution to the spoken language in this province.

The member from Durham talked about the weaknesses of what's before us. He talked about the simple reality that people are seeing their standard of living dropping. In consequence, their anger at the Liberal government is growing and this government is flailing—I don't think that's too strong—flailing about, trying to find a button they can hit that will calm people down. I think the member from Durham was quite correct in saying, you know what? You can hit as many buttons as you want. When you make people as unsettled as they are, put them in difficult circumstances, make it hard for them to carry on their daily lives, when you press them hard enough, at a certain point, even if you are giving back the money that they've paid to you, they are not inclined to be kind or tender in their feelings towards you.

He is quite correct in saying that seniors who are hard pressed need assistance, but more fundamentally, they need relief from the kind of action this government has taken that is pressing them as hard as it is.

In his comments, the member detailed those difficulties and talked about the problems his constituents are dealing with. Many of my constituents say similar things when I talk to them. This debate is the beginning of a larger debate, not the end of one.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: If I could seek unanimous consent for four—but anyway, I'll wrap it up here.

I would only say that the reflection with respect to being loquacious and the idea that perhaps James Joyce influenced me—I'd prefer to think that it was Dylan Thomas who actually gave me some insight into those commentaries.

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However, I will say this: I think the media got it right today, actually, when I looked at this article here. It says, "Preem Smartens Up on Hydro Rates." We're not alone on this side, trying to bring to the attention of the people of Ontario that the plan is this plan from Sussex Group, the renewable energy matters campaign outline. You should get your hands on it. Call my office. We'll be happy to get you a copy of this plan. It was the plan to deflect, delay, deny, dither and complicate your energy bill. The real truth here is that you're paying more and being blamed for not using less, and that's their energy policy. It's unfair to you; it's unfair to the people of Ontario not to be straightforward.

These comments that have been made today—I want to thank the member from Toronto–Danforth as well as the member from Beaches–East York, both of whom I respect. I understand their position on this file.

In contrast, I don't understand Premier McGuinty's position on this file. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga is a former teacher. I hope that they haven't taken the sign down off the door.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: She was an excellent vice-principal, I'm sure, and a committed educator. We're so short of those good people now.

The member from Whitby–Oshawa also, I think, was right. If you follow what your constituents are saying—I say to the Liberal members—if you listen to what your constituents are saying, in all segments of society and all income groups, all the way from businesses that say energy is too expensive to do business here in manufacturing, all the way down to seniors who are in their homes each day, perhaps on electric heat, this is not in any way going to help you. This bill is just a little admission that they made a big mistake.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to have a second speech today on a government bill.

I just want to touch on the explanatory note so that everyone who is watching is aware. It's the act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007, to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit. The explanatory note in this bill says, "The Taxation Act, 2007 is amended to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit announced in the 2010 Ontario Budget." It's still 2010, so I guess it's not too late. "The Ontario energy and property tax credit will apply for the 2010 and subsequent taxation years and will have two components: a property tax amount and an energy amount. For 2010, the tax credit is claimed in income tax returns filed by qualified individuals for the year. Starting in 2011, the Ontario energy and property tax credit is calculated using income information from income tax returns filed for the previous year, but is payable directly to eligible individuals in four quarterly instalments during the second half of the year and the first half of the following year."

If I read that right, there should be a cheque sometime in the middle of next summer, with one promised for

sometime in the fall. I have to say that that has to be more than fortuitous. It can't simply be that some accountant somewhere thought that would be a convenient time to send out cheques.

What we're dealing with here is a political problem that the government faces. I touched on it when I made my remarks about the member from Durham's speech. This government has made substantial mistakes in the way it has governed Ontario. Premier McGuinty has made profound errors on the electricity file. In introducing the HST, he has introduced a tax that substantially transfers wealth from the bulk of the population to some of the wealthiest corporations in Ontario, and the time of consequences draws near. The time of the 2011 election draws near. When we in this chamber spend time thinking about bills, it is best for us to keep that reality in mind.

I take the opportunity, as a number of members in this chamber do, to go and talk to my constituents at their doors on a regular basis. I have to say to you that there are three things this government has done that are causing it and will continue to cause it profound difficulties. One is its electricity policy, and I will give you a fair amount of detail on that. Second is the fact that it did not correct the downloading of expenses on municipalities when the economy was strong: That burden on the backs of people in our cities and towns and villages across Ontario continues to be substantial and causes an anger that this government is having to deal with, which is why we have a property tax credit before us in the bill today. And there's the HST itself, with all the difficulties that come in its train.

When I talk to people in their homes, when I go to the homes of people in my riding in East York, bungalows that were built with the \$2,000 that returning soldiers got from World War I or the loans that soldiers received when they got back from World War II, modest homes, well-maintained, inhabited, in many cases, by people who were born there and lived their whole lives there and are now looking at a situation where, between their pensions and their property taxes, their food bills and their HST, their electricity bills and their need to make sure that they're well-clothed, that they have some of the necessities of modern life, they find that increasingly it is difficult for them to hold on to those homes, homes, as I've said, that they may well have been born in and grown up in. As you can imagine, the attachment is profound, and when they feel that their stability in this home, which is part of their being, is threatened, then they become very unhappy.

When I talk to Chinese seniors in my riding, in homes that they have been in for 30 or 40 years, in which they have raised families, and they now find that on their restricted circumstances as a pensioner, they are increasingly finding it hard to cover all the bills that are coming at them, then again, it is no surprise, no mystery that they become extraordinarily cranky at the situation they find themselves in. Frankly, when you are deeply attached to a place, when you have done everything you

could, foregone holidays, done without, done everything you could for your children and your family and find even then that having played by the rules and contributed generously to a society, you are being pushed out, then your frustration and anger can boil over. And they do. They make very clear to me their concerns about what they're facing.

Now, earlier today in question period, the Minister of Finance was asked about his energy credit. He went on at some length about how the Conservatives used tax money to deal with their electricity cost problem—which is true. But for this Minister of Finance to use that as an accusation against someone else is quite extraordinary because, in fact, that is what we're doing today. There is an electricity affordability problem. The minister has brought forward legislation that will use tax money to subsidize people's electricity bills. It's as simple as that. That is the reality. We will have a chance to debate his further initiative to borrow \$1 billion per year to give people a subsidy directly on their electricity bill, something that he takes great offence at and uses as a criticism of another party. Frankly, I think that there may be times when it makes sense to use tax money to help deal with electricity bills, maybe a time when it makes sense to use revenue from electricity to help pay for the larger budget. That isn't an ideological question for me. What is extraordinary, though, is that for the finance minister, it is the subject, the heart of an accusation. For him to make an accusation about something that he himself is doing both in this act and another is, to me, extraordinary.

This bill before us is meant to give people a little bit of money every quarter during an election year and presumably for every quarter thereafter.

1630

If we look at why people are finding it difficult to pay their hydro bills, we need to look at what has been the McGuinty policy on electricity. What has he actually done to provide people in this province with electricity, how has he gone about it and what are the financial consequences of the choices that he made? I'll go into more detail, but just a quick list: Bringing in the HST and applying it to an essential like electricity has made life difficult for a lot of people. He didn't have to make that choice. He did not have to make that choice. He still has, in the time remaining to him before the election, the opportunity to correct at least part of his mistake when it comes to the electricity bills. If this government talks about the burden of the cost of electricity on seniors, it might well look to a decision that it itself made to put that burden on the backs of seniors.

This government might have engaged in an analysis of what our real hydro needs are. I have to tell you, I didn't get a chance to do the preparation for this speech that I wanted; I was preparing for another. Up until the latter half of the 1990s, the old Ontario Hydro kept a database of electricity consumption, sector by sector, so they had a sense of how many air conditioners there were in the province and how many homes were not air-conditioned. They knew the air conditioning load in the centre of each

city. They had a sense, numerically, statistically, in a database, of how much equipment was consuming how much power and what the potential was for growth.

My understanding was that that database research was discontinued in the Harris regime and was never reinstated by this government, so that when this government looks at demand for power and thus makes decisions to commit itself to a billion-dollar power plant, it does it on the basis not of that sort of in-depth research but on the basis of drawing a line from where things have been in the past. That is not a wise way to make a decision, and I'll speak to that at greater length.

This government decided to invest in smart meters and put a burden on the backs of seniors, put a burden on the backs of the rest of people in this society, with very little to show for it. That was a multi-billion dollar mistake in purchasing that is on the backs of these seniors, who are going to get a small part of that money back because of this bill.

This government did not deal with the question of privatization. It costs a lot of money to subsidize private companies to provide power. Bruce Power is getting a very, very good deal on Bruce energy. It is in a position where that nuclear power complex, which is having—what is it?—a \$2-billion overrun on its current phase, having had an overrun in the past which was equivalent to about 100% of the initial cost—that company got \$60 million last year for power it didn't produce. That company has got a very good sweetheart deal from the province of Ontario.

Gas companies get to build gas-fired power plants and sell power at a very good price.

The global adjustment mechanism: Those private power companies that sell into the market and find the market doesn't pay them enough get their losses covered in the global adjustment.

This government has made a commitment to nuclear power being the bulk of the power that we are going to pay for, for many, many years to come.

All of those pieces together—and I will go through them—show at the core a mistake on the part of this government in understanding what has to be done with electricity. There are consequences to making multi-billion dollar mistakes. People in this province are currently paying for them every day and, if the Minister of Finance is to be believed, with his graph in his economic update, are going to be paying a lot more for them in the next five to 10 years. That's of consequence, and even an energy tax credit is not going to deal with those consequences. We'll address it in a small way, but we'll not do it in a fundamental way.

Once in a generation a population gets the opportunity to reshape its infrastructure. Frankly, over the last century, we have built an electricity system in Ontario, with renewable power initially at its core, that served us well. Power at cost, public power based on renewable sources and hydro made us an industrial dynamo. It's critical to the standard of living that we have. That system over the century that was expanded into coal and into nuclear, that system that required the stringing of

thousands of kilometres of high-voltage transmission lines—that whole system is coming to a point where it has to be rebuilt.

It's coming to a point where part of it has to be shut down—coal-fired power—for reasons that you well understand, Speaker. People die from lung and heart disease related to the emissions from those coal plants. The climate that we depend on for our prosperity is being changed in part because of the contribution of those coal plants.

We here in this province, in a once-in-a-generation opportunity, can rebuild that electricity system to reflect the most advanced technologies of the 21st century, to reflect our needs as we understand them at this point in human history, and to use the development of electricity just as we did at the beginning of the 20th century: to make ourselves an economic power.

If you do that, there are many things that you have to have in mind that this government did not have in mind. If you're going to get rid of coal, which you have to, then you have to recognize that, that power being relatively cheap, you have to replace with it as much cheap power as you can. That wasn't part of this government's thinking. Instead of going for conservation and efficiency, the next-cheapest source energy that we can access, our old hydro plants being the absolute cheapest—instead of doing that in a strategic way that made that the centre of what we did, no, that has been a marginal effort. I will go into some detail on that. We've seen an investment in very expensive generation—gas-fired peak power plants, nuclear power plants—but very little investment in the conservation and efficiency that would allow us to balance out these new costs so that power would be affordable, so that we would not be pressing the province's economy and pressing the people of this province with bills that they find very hard to carry.

If you allow what was set in motion by the Harris-Eves government, the ongoing privatization of the system, then you undermine the affordability of the system. If you were to do a survey of power costs in the United States comparing private to public systems, consistently you would find the publicly owned systems were less expensive. Set technology aside for a moment. Having a publicly owned electricity infrastructure allows you to provide power at a lower cost. This government limited Ontario Power Generation, said that it couldn't develop new renewable power; didn't engage in large-scale leasing of energy efficiency technologies and renewable power to the public, to the public sector; and thus continued a process of privatization that, to this day, drains money out of the economy of this province.

1640

Is it any surprise that people have affordability problems? Is it any surprise that the government is trying to paper those over with this bill? No, it is no surprise. You make a fundamental strategic error at the beginning by not investing in conservation and efficiency. You don't understand that you have to balance new, higher costs with new, low-cost power so that you preserve affordability. You make sure that privatization continues the

pace, and right there, even without other matters, you set up Ontario for great difficulties in the years to come.

Right now in Ontario, there are hospitals that are running boilers to provide steam and heat for their operations that could be making electricity at the same time—cogeneration. We have thousands of megawatts of potential there for this province; we are developing a very small portion. There is a waste water treatment plant—a sewage treatment plant—in Ottawa, their main plant that, recognizing that it was going to be running boilers 24 hours a day, invested in cogeneration and cut their electricity bill by about \$1 million to \$1.5 million per year. We have never picked up on that opportunity in Toronto. We haven't had the OPA sit down and say, "How can we take advantage of the gas we're already burning?" So we haven't taken advantage of those low-cost opportunities.

Again, this is a government that is welded to private power interests, to gas interests, to fossil fuel interests, to nuclear interests, and that has turned its back on those options that in the end would make power far more affordable. Renewable power—and I'm talking about the broad range of it. There's no doubt that right now wind turbines cost more than our historic hydro power. They cost a lot less than new nuclear. There's no doubt that solar power is more expensive than nuclear right now, but in the long run, the jurisdictions that develop that power develop the manufacturing and technological leads that will allow them to compete on a global basis. But you have to balance it out. You have to make sure there are low-cost operations as well.

There is a hotel that has been built in this city on College Street that uses geothermal heating and cooling. They pump the heat out of the ground in the winter. They pump the cooling out of the ground in the summer. That system will pay for itself in eight years. In other words, the capital cost of putting it in is something that is covered by the savings in eight years, and after that it's gravy. The owner is able to pay substantially less for heating and cooling than they would if they were hooked up to the grid.

That kind of renewable power set up on a large-scale basis in Ontario would give people lower operating costs for their business and their homes and reduce pressure on the grid as a whole. That is a strategy that would make sense with renewable power that's cheaper than current conventional power. Did this government, has this government engaged in large-scale investment in that kind of renewable power? You know as well as I do: No, it has not, and thus it has set a course for high-cost electricity; thus it has meant that people take more out of their pockets to pay TransCanada PipeLines for their buildings and their power plants than we otherwise would be paying.

When you make decisions to build a \$1-billion gas-fired power plant or a multi-billion-dollar nuclear plant, it shapes where you put your wires, and those hydro towers that people see are very, very expensive to put in place. If, in fact, your home, my home, the homes of people who are watching right now, have dramatically less need

for power, then there would be less need for more transmission lines and there would be less need for investment in transformer stations. The whole pressure on the electricity system would be reduced and the need to put in new lines, new transformer stations would be reduced or eliminated. That would be a far more intelligent option than what we have before us—a blind commitment to reproducing the mistakes in nuclear power we've made in the past, a blind commitment locking us into gas-fired power plants that are very expensive. It is no wonder that this government needs a bill to paper over its mistakes, because these mistakes are very large. This government is papering over an abyss. It is an abyss that may well swallow the McGuinty government.

Smart meters, or not-so-smart meters, time-of-use meters—the published cost that we've seen is about \$750 per meter. That's roughly 150 bucks for the installation and the meter itself, and then there's the back end, all of the operations you need to collect the data and get the data out. That's a number that was published in the *National Post*. That was a number that I've discussed with journalists in this building. There are roughly four million meters in Ontario. At that rate, you're talking a cost of somewhere between \$2.5 billion and \$3 billion. It's a lot of money.

When you put in smart meters, your assumption is that people whose hydro bills are predominantly heating, cooling and hot water will be able to do something to substantially reduce those costs. That assumes that people have a lot of money in their pockets to invest in their homes. That is faulty logic.

People will be well aware that in the last year, a few studies have been published. One poll showed that 60% of Canadians said that if they missed one paycheque, they would be in financial trouble. So they don't have a lot of manoeuvring room. One study showed that people's debt load was equivalent to 147% of their disposable income. They don't have a lot of room for making large investments to cut their electricity costs.

When you know those realities, then saying, "Okay, we'll charge you more to force you to make a big investment" shows itself as hollow.

If, on the other hand, you were to go to homeowners and say, "We will lease you a solar hot water heater to cut your electricity use by 50% or 60% for hot water," or "We will lease you geothermal heating. You'll pay us for the next 20 or 30 years. It will cut the cost of heating and cooling," then you'd have big uptake. But the government's gone around it backwards, thinking they could force people to make those big investments.

If you go back to the beginning of the modern electricity age at the beginning of the 20th century, you will see that governments did a lot to provide goods and services to get people connected into the electricity grid in the first place. We need to think in that same way if we're going to have a society that has renewable energy powering it. That isn't the thinking we have with this government. That's of consequence. Seniors are paying for that. You are paying for that. I am paying for that.

I want to say about energy conservation—because I have talked about it, and I want to talk about the government's failure in this regard. From time to time when I've raised this, I've had loud shouts from the other side that, "No, no, no. We, in fact, have a plan. We know what we're doing." I want to just take the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario's document, *Rethinking Energy Conservation in Ontario*, talking about the realities of energy conservation in this province. A few years ago this government, the Liberal government, brought forward the integrated power supply plan, which had some targets for energy conservation. As I said earlier today, that whole plan was withdrawn a few years ago now. I understand it's to be reintroduced. For the last few years, we have not had a broad plan for electricity in Ontario. We've been operating under something called minister's directives. I have to say, they don't get reviewed by this Legislature, they don't reviewed by the Ontario Energy Board, there is no environmental assessment, and frankly, there is no follow-up from the minister as well.

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Interestingly, what the Environmental Commissioner writes is, "The Ontario Power Authority responded to the first supply mix directive as requested and provided an integrated power supply plan to meet the government-established conservation target of 6,300 MW. The process to approve the integrated power supply plan was started by the Ontario Energy Board but suspended when the second supply mix directive was issued. It is not known whether the Ontario Power Authority responded to this second directive." That's interesting. The minister makes a directive about how you provide power and we don't know how his central planning body responded to it? It is one of those mysteries.

"Neither the Ontario Power Authority nor the minister has publicly provided information on the status of completion of the second supply mix directive." That's kind of curious, eh? Even the Environmental Commissioner can't find out what happens to a major directive from the Minister of Energy.

The Environmental Commissioner in his very discreet and diplomatic way says, "According to Ontario Power Authority-supplied information, the Environmental Commissioner believes that achievement of the directives and, by extension, government policy has been mixed and in some cases underwhelming."

He notes some of the directives. October 2005, the low-income directive: The Ontario Power Authority was directed to find 100 megawatts of savings for low-income and social housing. The outcome: Three megawatts were saved.

What's the other good one? The March 2006 residential and electrically heated homes directive: Zero megawatts of the 150 megawatts from conservation in the residential sector in electrically heated homes have been achieved. That's pretty clear, eh? Nothing happened—zero.

March 2006, commercial buildings and MUSH, municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals directive:

Zero megawatts of 150 megawatts in conservation in commercial buildings and in municipalities, universities, colleges, schools, hospitals have been achieved.

These are very substantial targets of which almost nothing was achieved, according to the Environmental Commissioner.

What he goes on to say, even more interestingly, is, "The minister has not enforced compliance where the Ontario Power Authority has not completed or made progress on transition directives within a reasonable timeframe." The minister says it. It's a directive. But if it's ignored, that's okay; that's not a problem. That is not the basis for actually running a multi-billion-dollar system that supports the lives of 13 million people and a very large economy. The minister directs, and if you feel like it, you can go along with the directive or not. I'm talking about the people who have been hired to implement his directive.

"There appears to be no specific mechanism for the minister to enforce directives." Wow. If people don't do what he says, if his machinery of state doesn't produce the results, there is no mechanism to actually make sure that it happens.

For a government to say that it's doing its best to make sure we have clean, green, reliable energy in Ontario and not have a plan, not have a mechanism for enforcing its directions, not achieve its goals, you have to say, in the end, that this is a government in disarray, and it is no surprise that our bills are as high as they are. It is no surprise that this bill today has been pressed into service to try and give the government some cover for the consequences of its actions that are coming home to Ontarians on a daily basis.

I want to speak very briefly about nuclear power and its costs. As you are well aware, the Darlington nuclear power plant was originally budgeted at around \$4 billion. It was started, I think, in 1980, roughly, and came into operation around 1990-91. The final cost: around \$13 billion.

This government is committed to keeping nuclear at 50%, 55% of our energy mix. Its budget for the new Darlington plant was \$6 billion. The only figure that has ever been publicly released for the actual bid that was put forward by AECL, Team CANDU, the only number that has been released for a bid that they were willing to accept—because, apparently, the bidder was able, or willing, to take on any overruns—was \$26 billion, which in fact is pretty much the same increase, four times the original estimate, as the original Darlington plant. If you multiply by four whatever estimate you get, you'll probably get the number you'll ultimately wind up with. That has real implications for us.

When the old Ontario Hydro was wound up, when Mike Harris thought, "We will sell off Hydro," they had to take away the stranded debt. They had to take away the debt that couldn't be covered by revenue from the system itself. Frankly, a plant whose initial cost is estimated at \$4 billion and that comes in at \$13 billion is going to have some costs that aren't going to be covered by the power it produces. So we now have on our

electricity bills the debt retirement charge, and these seniors who are going to get the benefit of this energy tax credit are paying that bill now. They are paying a bill that—and the debt retirement charge is equivalent to about 10% of their electricity, and there are other expenses that are buried in the rest of the bill.

When you actually look at the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp.'s statements—and may you never have to, but if you're a real keener and want to, go look at them, because that debt retirement charge is only part of the money that's collected to deal with that leftover debt from that overinvestment in nuclear power. That's of consequence to people's power bills, and it's of consequence to their ability to stay in their homes, keep their lights on and keep themselves warm in the winter.

We have a government that has made fundamental mistakes about the direction of electricity policy, and in this bill and in others that will be before us soon, it is trying to deal with the turmoil that it has created.

It has a property tax credit. As you are well aware, there was a download that happened to municipalities in the 1990s that was never corrected by this government. That has meant that municipalities have had difficulty keeping up with their expenses and have put taxes—in Toronto, anyway—on people buying new licence plates, which, for people on fixed incomes who are trying to hold things together, was a red flag. I think it made a great contribution to the anger that was directed at the Miller regime in Toronto, when in fact the anger should have been with the provincial governments that downloaded, according to the numbers that I've heard, \$750 million to \$1 billion on the city of Toronto alone.

When people get angry at the costs of their municipality, they don't know that the income-tax-based revenue that comes into the province, that should pay for things like social housing and welfare, was in fact abandoned by the province and loaded onto the backs of municipalities.

You have the downloading that was not corrected, you have fundamental mistakes on electricity policy and then you have the HST put on top of all of that. It is no wonder that this government is scrambling for cover. It's pulling bills over top of its head every chance it gets. But as much as people will need these funds, I don't think that these funds will save the McGuinty government.

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I think I've outlined where the fault lines are with this government, the mistakes that it's made, the consequences that it has. What I hope is that someone in that government will stop making the fundamental mistakes that it has made that have cost the people of Ontario so much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), changes have been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mrs. Savoline assumes ballot number 61 and Mr. Hudak assumes ballot item number 68.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I was listening very carefully to the well-thought-out words from my friend and member from Toronto—a different part of Toronto than myself. The biggest issue here is the fact that this is not simply a phenomenon that's occurring in Ontario or in Canada; it's worldwide. If you watch some of the international news, you'll see that certain countries like Germany are phasing out nuclear power completely. Then you have other countries—I was reading about nuclear energy coming into France and Italy. There's a bit of a crisis right now—and the United States. Of course, we're closing our coal plants down and in the United States they're building coal plants and they're calling it "clean coal." It's kind of like saying "dry water." How do you have clean coal? It's kind of a difficult concept.

The key is that it all comes down to how to create energy. At the start of the statement that was made earlier, we talked about geothermal energy. Well, that's not something new. Just north of my riding, in Scarborough Centre, a federal building was built in the late 1970s that has an artesian well going deep underground and taking the heat out of the bottom of the ground, because it is hot. It brings it up during the wintertime to heat the whole building. It heats the building in the wintertime and then during the summertime it acts in the opposite effect. I don't know exactly how it works, but it's called a geothermal building. So it's been around for a while.

We have choices and decisions to make here. This government is committed to building an energy structure, a system that has a structure with it—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Toronto—Danforth is highly regarded in his commitment to the environment, so I wouldn't for a moment challenge his very sensible commitment to that goal. I think he would actually probably agree with some of the options that our side is putting up but I wouldn't want to put words in his mouth.

I just know that he did refer often to the Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller—who the Liberal government tried to fire a few months ago—an independent officer of the Legislature. Mr. Miller is a person I have a lot of respect for. In fact, I would say that when he questions things, one should listen. They came up with this in the OPA report. I'm quite familiar with the report, too. It was a supply mix report and the phase 1 said that there's going to be a certain percentage of generation from certain sources. Phase 2 somehow got ignored, and it's troubling. Then all of a sudden they had the cabinet shuffle, George came in; bang, they slapped on the green energy bill, the feed-in tariffs. The members on the other side speaking there—nothing of the sort.

Germany and those countries are backing away. A lot of offshore wind—these are big issues that we would probably support. Right off your riding in Scarborough there's going to be some wind turbines. Tell your constituents the facts. That's the real truth here. What are you paying for it, what are you charging them for and

who's picking up the difference? Tell the people the facts: that you're doubling or tripling the price of energy. Tell the facts to the people. The argument here is about truth in government, not your particular approach to this: give everybody a 10% cut, try to hide the real price.

I think you should listen to the member from Toronto–Danforth, probably, out of respect—maybe don't respond, because you don't know near as much as he does. I think technically that is what's most important here, to listen to the facts of his argument. I can say this to you: If you tell the truth, you never get into trouble.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened, of course, to the member from Toronto–Danforth and what he had to say. You know, he has a pretty good analysis here based not only on the environment but also a pretty good analysis of the political and economic reality of what is going on here in Ontario.

This government has made bad decisions. There can be no doubt that this government has made bad decisions on its energy file. Whether it's the refurbishing of nuclear reactors, whether it's paying 80 cents a kilowatt hour for wind—the highest, I believe, in all of North America—or whether it is doing whatever it's doing, it has made really bad decisions.

Some people may say the whole decision around the smart meters has not been the smartest thing that was ever done, because the reality is that it's not saving ordinary people any money and is not really reducing the usage of electricity enough to offset the very real costs of those smart meters.

But here we have a bill, as he correctly points out, that is nothing more than a government paper-over. You are papering over the mistakes by saying, "Oh, we're going to come up with a few crumbs, a few extra dollars for people who are mostly going to be hit the hardest in Ontario," and you've centred in on seniors. There's no doubt it's going to help some seniors. There's no doubt that seniors are particularly vulnerable around this file and a whole bunch of other costs that they can no longer bear. It is no surprise that when the food banks reported a couple of days ago about increasing food bank usage as people get poorer and poorer in this province, the group that was affected the most, with a fourfold increase, were seniors. It's seniors who are increasingly, because they don't have money, being driven to the food banks. They have to pay their electricity bill. They have to do all these other things.

The government is very real, and they know they have created the problem. This is just a little, tiny Band-Aid over that problem that's going to—

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is a pleasure to spend a couple of minutes making comments on remarks from the member from Toronto–Danforth.

I just want to express my compliment to the member, because when he was first elected, I believe, in a by-election here, he had some strong environmental pieces

that he brought into this House, and I think that with respect to today's economy or our environment, we need to be more cognizant of those things.

As I listened to his debate, he spent a little bit of time talking about Bill 109, but I'm not sure that was the focus of his time. I think he sort of wandered off—the same with the member from Durham in the past—into no man's land.

As governments of any stripe have been in this place and they see issues where some assistance is needed—that's what governments are for: They are there to lend a helping hand. We went through one of the worst recessions probably in 80 years, and it's not just in Ontario; it's all over the world. We see the economic recovery in Ontario: a little slow, but it's far superior to our neighbours to the south.

The other question, and hopefully the member from Danforth would tell us in his reply—yes, that's what the opposition is there for, to critique the government of the day, to make sure they ask those important questions, and I support that, but I have not seen what—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Peterborough is interrupting his own member.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm not sure I've seen what their crystal ball says, how they're going to fix the issue. They don't like coal. They don't like nuclear. So I'm not sure I've seen their crystal ball.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you to the members from Scarborough Southwest, Durham, Beaches–East York and Northumberland–Quinte West for their commentary.

Member from Northumberland–Quinte West, I look forward, actually, to having further discussion on the electricity file with, I think, the next bill that we'll probably get in the next few days, but I'll say to you, and I think I've said it many times in this House, if you have an electricity strategy, the core of it has got to be efficiency and conservation. Frankly, you should be targeting a reduction in electricity consumption of around 40%. I can enlarge on that later, but this is a short time.

What Mr. Prue, from Beaches–East York, had to say was quite disturbing to me. I didn't realize that seniors were the largest group experiencing growth at food banks. That's disturbing but also consistent with things that I hear when I go out and talk to people in the community about their being hard pressed to hold things together.

I have to say, when governments act to help people, that is a good thing, but governments should not have done damage to people in the first place. That is what I was trying to set out in my speech; if I failed, my apologies to all who listened to it. I tried to make it very clear that the government created this crisis and is now trying to give itself cover.

That is very different from a government going in to intercede when there has been a natural disaster or an economic upheaval to which it contributed nothing and

of which it is trying to deal with the problems and make sure that people are protected. No, this government made fundamental decisions and mistakes that have harmed our economy and people's household incomes and is now trying to protect itself with this bill.

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

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 109. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The government side is voting against one of their own bills.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): That's not a point of order. Thank you for your input.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

There will be a 30-minute bell. Call in the members.

I have just received a motion of deferral dated November 22, 2010.

"To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the third reading vote on Bill 109, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement the Ontario energy and property tax credit and to make consequential amendments—Minister Duncan—be deferred until Tuesday, November 23, 2010."

It is signed by Jeff Leal.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'll ask again: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

I declare the House is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1713.

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| Brownell, Jim (LIB) | Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry | |
| Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB) | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre | |
| Caplan, David (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | |
| Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB) | Barrie | |
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| Colle, Mike (LIB) | Eglinton–Lawrence | |
| Craitor, Kim (LIB) | Niagara Falls | |
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| Dhillon, Vic (LIB) | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest | |
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| Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB) | Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario |
| McMeekin, Ted (LIB) | Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale | |
| McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB) | Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier | Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones |
| Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP) | Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek | |
| Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités |
| Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB) | Huron–Bruce | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|--|
| Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC) | Richmond Hill York–Simcoe | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Murdoch, Bill (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB) | Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation |
| Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) O'Toole, John (PC) Oraziotti, David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Durham Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Kitchener–Conestoga Elgin–Middlesex–London Scarborough–Agincourt | Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Prue, Michael (NDP) Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB) | Beaches–East York Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce |
| Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London–Fanshawe Timiskaming–Cochrane Northumberland–Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB) | Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton–Mississippi Mills Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale | Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux |
| Van Bommel, Maria (LIB) Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) Wilson, Jim (PC) | Lambton–Kent–Middlesex Perth–Wellington Simcoe–Grey | Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée |
| Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC) | Kitchener–Waterloo Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke | Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Zimmer, David (LIB) | Willowdale | |

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Toby Barrett
Bob Delaney, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Leeanna Pendergast, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Steve Clark, Helena Jaczek
Kuldip Kular, Dave Levac
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Reza Moridi
Bas Balkissoon, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Ted Chudleigh, Mike Colle
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
Wayne Arthurs, M. Aileen Carroll
France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
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