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(Hansard)**

Thursday 2 December 2010

Jeudi 2 décembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 2 December 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 2 décembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Mr. Bartolucci moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre. Before I get into my remarks, I would like to spend a few minutes thanking several people who worked so very, very hard on this particular piece of legislation.

If I had to compare this place to a school, there's the principal and the vice-principal. The vice-principals here are called our parliamentary assistants. They don't get the recognition or the credit they deserve. I know members on both sides of the House here will say how hard parliamentary assistants work. This is an example of the incredible dedication shown by Donna Cansfield, the member from Etobicoke Centre, who did so much during the formation of this bill. I certainly want to thank her.

I also want to thank our second parliamentary assistant, Lou Rinaldi, the member from Northumberland-Quinte West. The reality is, as Donna and I were removed from our ministry in order to ensure that this legislation was right, Lou had to do a lot of the heavy lifting within the ministry. I just want to thank him so much.

I would be remiss, as well, if I didn't thank the incredible public servants we have in the Ministry of Municipal

Affairs and Housing, led by our deputy minister, Bill Forward; Janet Hope, our ADM; Melissa Thomson, the director of housing policy. They were critical to getting this piece right.

I also want to thank two former ministers, Jim Watson and Jim Bradley, who really worked hard on this legislation as well.

We have to do everything within the confines of the law, so Adam Lawlor from our legal branch was very, very important along this entire process.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't thank Brian Teefy, who is the political policy adviser for my ministry. He worked so, so very hard.

Publicly, to all those individuals, thank you so much. And thanks to the many people across the province of Ontario at 13 centres who took part in the consultation process.

Our government is looking to be more resourceful and strategic in developing real solutions in light of the fiscal pressures we all face. The proposed Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2010 and related long-term affordable housing strategies introduce a package of initiatives that will transform the face of affordable housing in Ontario. It provides a solid foundation and the necessary framework to work with our housing partners to provide safe, affordable housing choices for Ontarians.

As David Rennie, president of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, has said, "This strategy articulates the province's recognition of the importance of strong partnership and collaboration with municipalities in the area of housing." And as Sharad Kerur, executive director of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, has said, "This strategy, and the accompanying legislative reforms, should create much-needed local flexibility, allowing communities to better engage the power of community-based non-profit housing providers in meeting local housing needs."

Affordable housing plays a critical role in addressing many of the province's most pressing challenges. It helps to lift low-income families out of poverty by reducing the cost of housing and freeing up income to pay for other family needs such as food and clothing. There is widespread evidence that safe, adequate and affordable housing is a key factor in determining health, and has a positive impact on the educational achievement of children and families.

According to the Canadian Council on Social Development, children living in adequate housing have significantly higher overall health and do better in school

than those living in inadequate housing. Affordable and social housing also provides the opportunity to build stronger communities and neighbourhoods.

The redevelopment of Regent Park in Toronto is one example that illustrates the positive impact of building communities that are well-integrated, have local community services and supports, and attract investment.

In addition to the social benefits of investing in affordable housing, there is also a significant economic impact. New affordable housing units typically generate 2.2 person-years of employment per unit. An investment of \$100,000 in social housing renovation creates 1.8 person-years of work per unit. For example, the \$1.2-billion housing funding that was announced in the 2009 budget is estimated to create 23,000 jobs.

Housing is important to the people of Ontario, and housing matters for many reasons. There are too many people living on the streets, perhaps trapped by mental illness or addiction. There are too many children in Ontario who worry about when they will have to move again and change schools. There are too many people in Ontario who can't find a home where they can manage their disability and live independently.

Housing matters, because if a person can have a home, they can have dignity, they can care for their family, they can be involved in their community, they can get an education and they can get a job and plan for the future.

Let me spend a few seconds talking about the vision, principles and pillars that this legislation depends upon. The vision that has guided our strategy reflects this: to improve Ontario's access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing, and to provide a solid foundation on which to secure employment, raise families and build strong communities.

As the strategy is long-term in reach and broad in scope, it will be guided by six key principles.

0910

The first principle is that this strategy is people-centred, meaning that housing programs, services and supports should be based on a people-first approach that focuses on positive results for individuals and families.

The strategy is partnership-based. Housing in Ontario requires strong partnerships between all levels of government, non-profit and co-operative housing providers, and the people who require housing support to build healthy, sustainable and inclusive neighbourhoods.

Third, the strategy is locally driven, meaning that affordable housing must be locally relevant and provided in a supportive environment that includes access to jobs, community resources and services.

The strategy is supportive, as housing policy in Ontario should help those who are in need of housing to move into permanent, affordable housing with appropriate support services.

The strategy is inclusive, meaning that all persons have the right to equal treatment and protection from discriminatory practices that limit their housing opportunities.

The strategy is fiscally responsible and needs to reflect fiscal circumstances as they evolve to promote a diverse housing marketplace that helps Ontarians access affordable housing.

We have listened to our stakeholders and partners, and that has helped us shape our long-term strategy that focuses on results for people. The strategy sets the stage for a transformed affordable housing system built on four key pillars: putting people first, creating strong partnerships, supporting affordable options and accountability.

The strategy builds, in particular, on our strong partnership with municipalities. In 2008, the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review reached a landmark agreement that will provide municipalities with a net benefit of \$1.5 billion annually by 2018. The review was a wide-ranging initiative that examined the provincial-municipal relationship in order to improve the delivery and funding of services for Ontarians. Our long-term strategy builds on many recommendations from the review, including working together to build locally managed housing services, a stronger focus on positive results for people and simplifying the delivery of income assistance supports.

One of the consensus recommendations that resulted from the review was the need for the province to work with its municipal partners "towards consolidating the existing range of housing and homelessness programs into a housing service managed at the municipal level." The consolidation of housing and homeless programs is a cornerstone of our strategy that will allow funding to be used in a more flexible manner to address local housing needs.

Affordable housing is also an important part of Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, which concluded in 2008 that the province needed to work with its housing partners to make it easier for families to find and maintain affordable housing. In 2009, we held extensive province-wide consultations to hear from the public, our partners and stakeholders about different perspectives on the housing system. We held 13 different public consultation sessions in communities across Ontario.

Our consultations told us that the current housing system is too complicated and overly restrictive. We heard that there are too many programs with too many rules with too much red tape that do too little for the people they're supposed to serve. We also heard that the current system does not adequately address local needs and local priorities.

During our consultations, it became very clear that the existing issues within the housing system are highly complex and that a multi-pronged response to address legislative, program and service delivery challenges was required. Through these consultations, Ontarians, municipalities and stakeholders—the people on the front lines who use and deliver housing services—have helped shape the long-term strategy.

The need for a long-term affordable housing strategy has been a long time coming for Ontario. In the late 1990s, the province transferred responsibility for social

housing to the municipal part, as part of the local services realignment. In order to facilitate devolution, the province created 47 municipal and district social services administrative bodies, known as service managers, that are responsible for the management of housing services across the province. At that time, the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, was introduced as a mechanism to implement the transfer of social housing to service managers. The Social Housing Reform Act was developed to ensure that the province had sufficient oversight as service managers transitioned to a new responsibility as the primary funders and administrators of social housing. This legislation, we found out, was highly prescriptive, complex and an administrative burden. It was like Big Brother was overseeing what the municipalities were doing, which is why we need better legislation that also reflects current realities in the housing system.

Over the past 10 years, service managers have developed the capacity and experience to manage and administer social housing programs, services and supports. We thank them for that. Service managers have embraced their role as the service system managers for housing programs and are best positioned to assess local needs, set local priorities and integrate services. This was confirmed by the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. Our proposed new legislation would more fully recognize local government as a capable, responsible and accountable order of government. The heavy-handed restrictions in the Social Housing Reform Act, whether intended or unintended, are no longer necessary and limit the ability of service managers to develop housing solutions that best meet local needs.

This does not mean that we are abandoning our interest in housing. In fact, through the proposed legislation the province is strengthening accountability through a new shared accountability framework with service managers. The proposed legislation would set out key provincial interests that service managers must address in developing new local housing and homelessness plans. The province will also work with service managers to develop local performance measures to track progress in implementing these local plans and will help ensure that there is strong mutual accountability between service managers and the province. This is truly a partnership.

Over the past seven years, the McGuinty government has re-engaged in the housing area because we understand that stable, affordable housing opens doors for a better future for Ontario families. Our government has developed various new programs and made significant investments in affordable housing, and we have worked with our municipal and federal partners to provide more housing supports to those in need. Under our government, the largest affordable housing agreement in Canadian history was signed with the federal government.

However, despite our significant investments, additional work is required to ensure that the range of housing and homelessness programs, supports and services work better. The current system of housing and homelessness services is highly complex, involving federal,

provincial and municipal funding, and cost-sharing arrangements with a variety of service delivery partners involved in overlapping human services. There are too many programs, each with their own design, rules, eligibility and target groups. In this sort of environment, with narrow program parameters, service providers can struggle to help people with complex needs. Those in need can find it difficult and discouraging to gain access to complicated and uncoordinated programs.

0920

This strategy, thankfully, introduces a number of policy initiatives that are centred on producing positive results for individuals and families. It recognizes that local flexibility offers the best path to address the diverse needs across our province in order to build healthy, strong communities. The proposed new legislative framework would be more responsive to local needs.

A good housing strategy must be about people, neighbourhoods and communities, rather than what best suits government. Under the strategy, service managers would develop multi-year housing and homelessness plans that reflect provincial interests and address local housing and homelessness needs. This approach would also accommodate the specific housing needs of different areas of the province, such as rural and northern Ontario, where a unique housing response is often required.

Service managers would also have a more active role in policy and the design and delivery of local programs, supports and services. For example, under our strategy, funding that must currently be used for shelter beds could instead be used to house a person in more stable and affordable housing, and the remaining funds can be used to provide additional social supports for the now housed individual. By giving our municipal partners that flexibility to use provincial funds in a way that makes sense at the local level, people will have a real opportunity to improve their lives.

This is a real example of how our innovative people-first strategy would work. Housing programs would be flexible and tailored to different needs, and tax dollars would be used more efficiently. Paul Johnson, the director of Neighbourhood Development Strategies—

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: A good guy.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The Minister of Revenue says he is a good guy. I met him for the first time on Tuesday; he is a wonderful guy.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: He does a lot for Hamilton.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Yes, he works with the city of Hamilton. He has said, “Consolidating existing funding portfolios will provide opportunities for communities to develop innovative solutions that can ensure stronger outcomes for the unique needs of the people they serve.” It makes sense.

We would also put people first by reforming the rent-geared-to-income calculation process. Under the current system, a tenant living in a rent-geared-to-income unit must declare every time their income changes, which can result in immediate increases—immediate increases—in their rent. This can make it very difficult to get ahead. It

creates barriers and provides disincentives to work. It also means that service managers have to spend a lot of their resources and time on administering the rent-gear-to-income system.

Our legislation, if passed, would simplify the rent-gear-to-income calculation process. In most instances, tenants would only declare their income once a year, allowing them to use extra money to increase their standard of living, rather than having it clawed back on their rent—something that is clearly a disincentive. As Mary-Anne, a single mother living in Ontario, has said, “My dream is home ownership. With this change to the way the rent is calculated, it will make it that much easier to do so. I know there are lots of people who need to live in a place like this. If I can move out and give someone else the opportunity that I have had by living in a co-op on rent geared to income, that would be fantastic.” She has lived the experience and welcomes the change.

As a province, we are working to ensure the sustainability of public services. We need to be concerned not just with spending the dollars we have a responsibility for today, but thinking about how to manage current programs, activities and resources in a way that can be sustained over time.

To help put things into perspective, this strategy comes at a time when Ontario and the rest of the world are adapting to the fiscal realities of the recession. Governments are experiencing higher demand for social supports while at the same time coping with a lower revenue base. Over the last few weeks, we have heard about the drastic cuts governments around the world are making to housing and other human services. While the current fiscal circumstances limit our ability to make additional investments in housing at this time, affordable housing remains a significant priority for our government. The strategy provides a foundation and direction for future investments and focuses on doing better with existing resources.

While a significant milestone, Ontario’s long-term affordable housing strategy is the beginning of a journey to deliver real housing solutions for Ontarians. The future of housing depends on adequate, sustained funding, which is why a long-term commitment is needed from the federal government as well. The lack of long-term sustainable funding limits the ability of housing providers to plan long term and fully participate in capital projects that build more affordable housing.

I think it’s a well-known fact that Canada is the only G8 country without a national housing strategy. We need the federal government to lead a coordinated national response to address the need for adequate housing across Ontario. Ontario will be a willing partner in that. We also call on our fellow provincial and territorial counterparts to join our efforts to engage the federal government to create a housing framework that includes long-term, flexible funding for affordable housing. It’s very important that we do so, each province, each territory and our country as a whole, and so we reinforce the need for a federal long-term affordable housing strategy.

Our long-term strategy is an extension of Ontario’s commitment to affordable housing and is about making

our investments work better for people. Over the past few years, our significant investments in affordable housing have helped families and individuals in communities across Ontario. Here are some of the ways we’ve done that: More than \$2.5 billion has been invested to build and repair over 200,000 units of affordable and social housing; more than 35,000 rent supplements have helped low-income Ontarians pay their rent, which includes a \$50-million short-term rent support program that will be available in 2011; and more than \$430 million is invested in annual operating funding for housing and homelessness services. These programs and services have clearly made a real, positive impact for people and communities. Now we are focusing on making even better use of the resources at our disposal to ensure that housing programs and services produce the best possible outcome for Ontarians.

This plan continues our government’s commitment to develop good public policy that creates opportunities for people to achieve their full potential. As Keith Ward, the president of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, has said, “The long-term affordable housing strategy is an important moment in the history of affordable housing in Ontario.”

I’d now like to pass my time over to my very hard-working parliamentary assistant, Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre.

0930

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

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you, Minister. In our 2007 platform, this government made a commitment to create a long-term strategy for affordable housing in Ontario. Today we are making good on that commitment.

You heard the minister speak about how our consultation on this strategy told us that the current housing system is too complicated and that it creates barriers for people in need. The people who deliver housing programs told us they were unable to develop the best possible services because of dated provincial rules.

Last year, this government held consultations in several communities across our province. Over 1,100 Ontarians attended these consultations, and we received over 100 formal submissions from housing stakeholders and organizations. We also held specialized round table sessions which included landlord and tenant organizations, municipalities, home builders associations, social and cooperative housing organizations, seniors’ organizations, aboriginal partners and social advocacy groups. Our approach to developing this long-term strategy was inclusive, it was comprehensive, and it was thorough.

I would like to thank the dedicated individuals and organizations that helped shape this long-term strategy. Their expertise is respected, and their commitment to improving lives and building strong communities helps to make Ontario a great place to live.

Some of the key issues that were identified through the consultation process include, one, the need to reform the existing social housing legislation; secondly, the need

to increase local flexibility to deliver and to promote affordable housing opportunities; and, third, the desire to work closely with and engage the federal government to seek long-term support of affordable housing. I would like to speak briefly about each of these issues.

In terms of legislative reform, it was very evident from our consultations that a far more strategic legislative framework was needed for affordable housing in Ontario. Ten years ago, the province got out of the housing business. Local service realignment represented the largest reorganization of provincial and municipal responsibilities in the history of Ontario. The Social Housing Reform Act was used to facilitate the transfer of funding and administration for social housing to municipalities.

The McGuinty government re-engaged in housing. Under our government, record investments in affordable housing have taken place. We've also recognized that the Social Housing Reform Act, with all of its many rules and regulations, and which goes on for hundreds of pages, is far too cumbersome. We heard from many of our partners and stakeholders as well; they felt the same.

Our new legislative framework would be people-centred and provide a strong foundation for moving forward. It would chart government direction for new investments. It will provide a coherent plan for addressing housing needs across the housing continuum from homelessness to mortgage-free ownership and to inform federal-provincial negotiations so that federal money is spent as efficiently and quickly as possible to benefit those Ontarians in need.

Our government is proposing a new bill that introduces proposed new affordable and social housing legislation and also proposes to amend provisions in the Planning Act and the Residential Tenancies Act. We have introduced new legislation in this Legislature that, if passed, would transform the way housing and homelessness services are delivered, focusing on achieving better outcomes for people. This new legislation would provide a single overarching policy direction for affordable housing. It would have clear linkages to the homelessness prevention and support systems. It will clearly define the new provincial role as a steward of Ontario's housing system. This would mean setting out provincial interests to be respected in community housing plans, introducing new indicators to measure progress of these plans and establishing a shared accountability framework with municipalities that would oversee the system.

If enacted, the new enabling legislative framework for social housing would replace the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, and eliminate redundant provisions tied to the transfer of housing programs which are no longer necessary. The legislation would streamline other sections to simplify administration.

The new legislation would provide opportunities for service managers to more effectively manage their portfolios. It would ensure appropriate accountability measures are in place to better respond to the needs of low-income households and the social housing sector, and it would create new opportunities for tenants to save money and to become more self-sufficient.

There was a need to increase local flexibility in the housing plan, and a key part of our strategy is to establish more local flexibility to deliver better housing services to our communities. Our strategy will be flexible and consider the diversity of communities of all sizes, be they urban, rural, in the north or the Far North, because different communities have different priorities and different needs. Ontario will work closely with municipalities to ensure that we meet the unique needs of diverse communities.

By establishing clear roles and responsibilities, and by measuring our progress, we will ensure that housing services are affordable and effective. Both municipalities and the province, through the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, recognize that local solutions provide the best outcomes for those in housing need and that service managers have developed the capacity and experience to manage housing programs, services and supports.

In developing the long-term housing strategy, we have been working in close collaboration with our municipal partners, and their input has been instrumental in shaping this strategy.

Our proposed legislation would set out for the first time the provincial interest in relation to Ontario's system of housing and homelessness programs. The provincial interest would focus on achieving positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities through a co-ordinated, accountable system that treats people with respect and with dignity. It would recognize the role of municipal players, multiple players, in providing local housing and homelessness services.

Under our proposed legislation, service managers would be responsible for establishing a local vision for housing and for those homelessness services through the development of a multi-year local housing and homelessness plan. The requirement for these plans is a key element of our new accountability framework and is consistent with the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review.

It was recommended that communities engage in integrated human services planning. These plans would provide the foundation for consolidation of housing and homelessness programs. They would provide municipalities with more flexibility, enabling them to direct housing and homelessness resources more effectively to where they are needed most. They would ensure that planning for housing is done in a coordinated fashion with other local planning, such as land use planning, human services planning and infrastructure planning.

Our proposed legislation would require that local plans reflect provincial interests and be developed through consultation with the public. To enhance accountability, each service manager will be required to report on specific performance measures. These plans would guide local housing services for at least 10 years and would need to be reviewed at least every five years.

These changes would be rooted in a new partnership with municipalities, recognizing the critical role that municipalities have in delivering housing services to

Ontarians and allowing them to do their job more effectively.

I would like to briefly discuss a few other key elements of our strategy in the proposed legislation.

The new act would provide for the delivery of new, cost-effective services for the housing sector through an expanded mandate for the current Social Housing Services Corp. Under the proposed legislation, the Social Housing Services Corp. would be renamed the Housing Services Corp. It would continue to be an independent, non-profit organization, responsible for managing and administering cost-effective goods and services to its members.

Currently, the corporation has a prescribed mandate in legislation. It is unable to offer new services to housing providers and social housing tenants. As part of our commitment to create stronger partnerships, this legislation would provide the Housing Services Corp. with an expanded mandate to also offer optional access to its services, as appropriate, to affordable and supportive housing providers and tenants. It would also be able to offer additional optional services and supports that will help tenants and housing providers, such as energy-efficiency initiatives, tenant property insurance and tenant financial education.

0940

I would also like to note that through enabling provisions in the proposed legislation, the Housing Services Corp. would work with service managers to pilot an asset-building program that would help tenants living in social housing to plan for their future and to become more self-sufficient. Tenants would save money for specific purposes, such as training and education, without reducing their rent-geared-to-income assistance. This would potentially remove disincentives to seeking employment and education opportunities, and it would improve economic outcomes for low-income households.

We are also planning amendments to the Planning Act that would require municipalities to establish policies allowing second units in new and existing developments. This would provide more affordable options for lower- and moderate-income households and for elderly parents or live-in caregivers. These units can provide additional income for homeowners such as first-time homebuyers and would help them with their mortgage payments. A reference to affordable housing would be included in the matters of provincial interest in part II of the act, and the period of time for which a bylaw may authorize the temporary use of a garden suite would be increased from 10 years to 20 years.

These changes would further expand affordable housing opportunities. They would build on the range of planning and financial tools that are currently available to municipalities that encourage affordable housing, including property tax exemptions for municipal housing facilities, loans and grants, and establishing affordable housing targets through official plans.

Finally, the proposed legislation and our long-term strategy would help tenants in a number of other ways, a couple of which I will highlight. There will be a new

local and more independent review of certain decisions they feel are unfair and unreasonable. Housing providers would also have access to this review process.

Our government would continue to support victims of domestic violence by retaining the special priority policy that gives them priority on the social housing waiting list. We will also work with municipalities and housing providers to identify additional options to meet the needs of victims of domestic violence. Service managers would also be required to include a plan for housing special-priority-policy applicants as part of their comprehensive local housing and homelessness plans.

We have developed a strategy that will, in good and in lean economic times, achieve more with existing resources by retooling and enhancing the existing system so that it better meets the needs of the people it serves.

However, housing depends on adequate sustainable funding, and we need the federal government to make a long-term commitment. Unlike many industrialized countries, Canada has never had a national housing strategy or a housing framework. Currently, the federal funding for housing is short-term, program-specific and declines over time under specific agreements. That is why, with support from our municipal partners, the province continues to call upon the federal government to develop a housing framework based on a long, stable funding commitment.

We have often partnered with the federal government to ensure that Ontarians have more access to affordable housing throughout the province. But long-term sustainable funding is integral to the success of an affordable housing system that supports the need both today and tomorrow.

Our long-term strategy is an extension of Ontario's commitment to affordable housing. Over the past few years, our significant investments in affordable housing have helped hundreds of thousands of families and individuals in communities right across Ontario. In addition, Ontario invests approximately \$430 million in annual operating funding for housing and for homelessness services. These ongoing funds support important programs and services such as emergency hostels, supportive housing that provides additional assistance for people in need and the provincial rent bank, which has prevented more than 23,800 evictions to date.

This government understands that affordable housing opens doors to a better future, and that's why, despite significant global economic challenges, we have not removed a single penny of the funds earmarked for housing. Record investments notwithstanding, we heard from people across the province that Ontario can do better and we agreed.

We've made significant investments in the housing system, but we understand there is still more to be done. Our efforts to improve the housing system are ongoing and we will continue to work with our partners and our stakeholders moving forward, understanding that transforming the housing system is a long-term commitment.

I had the pleasure recently of spending some time with Neil Hetherington and Habitat for Humanity. One of the

most outstanding pieces of information that I received from him was that in the approximately 1,800 homes that have been built for families—typically, these are modest-income families in need or people who have no home—there is a 98% rate where the young people who now have stable housing have gone on to finish their high school education, but more importantly, have gone on to post-secondary education in one form or another; 98%. So that small piece of research tells us how important housing is to providing a stable life for our young people so that they, in turn, have a future, enabling them to get out of that circle of poverty; enabling them to dream like each of our children have over the years of what they can do, where they can go and who they can become. So housing is a really important part of the social fabric of Ontarians. It's an extraordinary part of the policy and the commitment of the Liberal government, our government, to move forward and say, "What is it that we can do, given our times, to make a difference in the lives of a lot of people?"

I started years ago with something called Beatrice House, when I discovered, in a really inadvertent way, that there were more than 1,000 homeless families on the streets in Toronto. I couldn't quite grasp that there were 1,000 homeless families. I'd heard of homeless people, of course; you see them on the street, and you knew about the shelters, but I'd never thought about the impact of children not having a place to rest, a place to eat, a place to go to school, a place they could call home. Having been a school trustee, I was well aware of the challenges of children who have had multiple places where they've stayed. Often their schooling fell apart because they tend to fall through the cracks. But I was overwhelmed by the fact that we had these folks on the street.

I was blessed to be able to work with Dr. Fraser Mustard and many others—the Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain—and to be part of a group who put together Beatrice House, which is now run by the YWCA in a former school in Toronto. Over the years, we've been able to provide for them—we being the people of Ontario, as well as social benefactors—an opportunity for children to have a place they can call home while their moms—typically, it's moms—get a better education, get social services support, have that envelope that supports them as they move forward and, ultimately, get a job, get back into society and provide that stability for their children. That's what housing is all about.

That's why we've made the kind of commitment we have. That's why we've listened to the people who are on the ground, making a difference day to day, as they told us the system we had in place was far too cumbersome, with too many rules, too many regulations and too many burdens that didn't enable them to have the flexibility that they needed. Whether they lived in Wawa or Cornwall or Windsor or Toronto, one size doesn't fit all. They needed to have that flexibility.

One of the other things we've forgotten about when we talk about homelessness is that we unfortunately also have homeless seniors. We have people who need social

housing as they grow older. They don't have a place to live. So we're looking at the whole spectrum. Homelessness is not just restricted to a particular age group; it can actually go across all Ontarians.

I know that each of us feels the same in that we want to do whatever it is we can to help those less fortunate. It's just part of who we are; I think it's in our DNA. We want to make a difference. I don't think there's anybody in this House who doesn't believe that there is a place for social housing in this province. The issue is, how do we work together effectively and efficiently with the providers, with the service managers, knowing our restrictions, to start a strategy? I say start a strategy that will take us to where we ultimately want to go, and that is to be able to provide adequate housing, adequate social housing, rent-gear-to-income housing, supporting those people who just need a hand up for a little while till they get their feet on the ground and a job established. That's part of who we are and what we want to do.

Thank you very much for allowing me this opportunity to discuss the long-term housing strategy on behalf of the province of Ontario.

0950

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I agree with the member's final words regarding this House: It's what we all want. The fact of the matter is, this bill doesn't do it.

One of the main things that municipalities need and want, in order to manage properly not only their housing situation but also the rest of their municipal agenda—one thing that they do need is they need to know what kinds of monies they're getting from the provincial government on an ongoing basis, on a year-to-year basis, and this bill doesn't do it. It doesn't give them any assurance that there's any funding. Any funding that may come out of this bill is dependent on federal sharing, and that puts it in someone else's hands. There's no guarantee; there's not even an intelligent projection that the municipalities can do in order to determine how much money they're going to have to spend next year or the year after or down the road. You can't build a good prototype, you can't build a system, without knowing how it's going to be funded.

Although the words are good in this bill, and I'm sure it will have some support from the municipalities, because it does include allowing the municipalities—for any funds they do get, they can be flexible with those funds. They don't have to go into specific silos, which is good. It gives the municipalities some credit for having some intelligent people working there who can determine where they best need to put that money, because every municipality is different and you can't treat them all the same. So the municipalities will like that flexibility. But it doesn't give them any assurance of funds, or a formula for those funds, into the future, and that's too bad. I think the government missed an opportunity.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To put it simply, not one of those thousand homeless families will find housing because of this. Not one person or family of the 140,000 families that are waiting for housing will find housing because of this. Not one of the 250,000 folk in Ontario who pay more than 50% of their income on rent will find any solace in this.

In fact, of the 485 housing stakeholders who consulted for over six months and submitted a thousand submissions, none of them are happy either. They asked for five distinct actions on behalf of this government. The government has failed on all five: no new units, not one; no money, not a dollar; no rent supplements—asked for by everyone; no inclusionary zoning provisions, or the ability for municipalities to get that, which is what the municipalities have asked for.

All this does—and it really only promises to do it; it doesn't actually do it—is simplify rent geared to income. That's the only actually positive step. And yes, it gets rid of some of the red tape.

This is a shameful, laughable attempt to placate those who have been calling for three years for a housing strategy. Four housing ministers we've seen come and go with this government, and again, we're not looking at one new unit, one new dollar. Guess what? In March 2011, the federal government is getting out of the business. The money is going to drop even further.

We're dealing with homelessness as a national disaster in the city of Toronto, the GTA, and this bill will do absolutely nothing to address that. That's the reality. The small, slight little changes they've made are simply that: an admission of ineffectiveness.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would like to add a couple of minutes of my comments to the minister's and the parliamentary assistant's leadoff on this particular new piece of legislation.

I just want to go back a little bit and say that during the consultation process—I'm going to go back prior to the housing, to the poverty reduction strategy that the Premier put in place back in 2007-08; I was part of that group. We consulted not only across Ontario but across Canada and some places outside of Canada, and housing was always a big issue.

Fast-forward to the consultations that then Minister Watson initiated to come up with some strategy. We need to remember that housing was sort of handed out to the municipal sector very much in a straitjacket, with very little flexibility. So during the consultations that were initiated by then Minister Watson, I attended a number of them, and I had some of my own in my riding. One of the things that kept coming up over and over again is that it's not all about money all the time. Yes, money plays a big role in this. There's money that governments of all levels are investing in housing, but as most governments normally do, we form these boxes and not everybody fits into that box.

We talk about the homeless in the streets of Toronto who are sleeping on the sidewalks. In the communities

where I come from, there's not much of that, but there are people in Concession 21 of Brighton township who have no car, have no means of transportation, so we need to give the flexibility to those communities to do what they do best and be good providers.

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

Seeing none, the honourable member for Etobicoke Centre has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to stand, and I appreciate the comments that have come, but the fact of the matter is we're putting \$450 million annually into the programs dealing with housing and homes.

There's no question there is a deficit, but part of the deficit results from the fact that the previous government cancelled 17,000 units. That's a reality check. If you cancel it and you don't do anything for 10 years, obviously you are going to have a deficit, and we inherited that deficit. So we're going to try to do something about it.

I don't care which party is in power. We have a \$20-billion deficit that we need to deal with. What we have been able to do is find a way, working with the municipalities—remember the previous government down-loaded to municipalities; we're uploading, working with them—trying to find solutions considering exactly what we've got to be able to work with.

I think it's particularly important that we met with the service managers, 47 of them, and asked them what it was that they needed to be able to provide the housing needs in their communities. The greatest thing they need is flexibility, and they needed the red tape to start the process of how to do this better, given the circumstances they are working in. And that we did. This bill actually provides a host of opportunities to start the process, recognizing that there is in fact more to do.

I think it's also important to say that we have 22,000 new units under way, \$1.2 billion worth of investment; overall, a \$2.3-billion investment this government has made into housing in this province. You can't take that away. That's exactly what we've been able to do. I think that shows our commitment on how we are going to move forward, but absolutely, given our reality, we are working within our means, which is exactly what every Ontarian would like us to do. I think that this is—

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to stand and begin my comments on Bill 140 this morning, an act that's called the Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act; the short title, of course, is the Housing Services Act.

I must say that this piece of legislation and the corresponding plan, Building Foundations: Building Futures, have been long awaited. They were promised seven years ago. They've been three years in the making, and given the great expectation, this is, by all accounts, a backtrack.

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I was more than surprised at the way this government chose to release these two documents. Let me just run

through the events of the past few days. On Monday, November 29, the government quietly, and definitely without any notice to my office as critic, released their long-term affordable housing plan, *Building Foundations: Building Futures*. Although the title indicates that the government is building, the plan doesn't propose to build any new housing developments. It doesn't provide any funding to a housing subsidy. It doesn't propose any new programs. Most importantly, it doesn't reduce the numbers on the current social housing waiting list.

After three years' time, I think we are safe to say that this report does not achieve the goals that it was expected to achieve. This government's affordable housing plan shows no initiative. There are no new real ideas and, as we have seen many times before, this plan, too, includes dependency on federal funding.

Obviously the government wasn't too proud of this long-awaited report because, in a ploy to distract from it, a few hours after the release of the report they introduced a massive, new, almost 100-page bill. Staying true to this government's way, the members opposite tried to ram this bill through by starting debate only two days after it was released, something that we appealed and were able to at least begin one day later.

The industry stakeholders weren't even able to get a copy of the bill until almost noon on Tuesday, almost a full day later. I will tell you that my office sent out copies of this piece of legislation to stakeholders, and they were anxiously waiting to see what the contents were and, more importantly, what it meant for them.

I want to talk a bit more about the government's so-called long-term affordable housing plan. The arrival of this long-anticipated report dates back to 2007. During the 2007 election campaign, the McGuinty government promised Ontarians an affordable housing strategy. The strategy was supposed to be a 10-year plan for affordable housing in Ontario. According to their 2007 platform, the strategy would contain a mix of non-profit and co-operative housing and would take advantage of creative financial options. The report was to be released this past spring. In fact, the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member from St. Catharines, promised to release the eagerly anticipated report by June 21 of this year. When he took over as minister at the beginning of the 2010 is when he made this promise.

As the members opposite know, the report was not released in the spring and it was postponed until now. At the time the delay was announced last spring, a ministry spokesman said: "The ministry was going to be working full tilt through the summer to get this very important plan correct."

I guess the three years they had wasn't enough and they had to cram for another few months. Well, this decision was very upsetting to many. Stakeholders were frustrated and disappointed. Ontarians were disappointed and particularly those 142,000 Ontarians on the current affordable housing wait list were very disenchanting.

Let me read a few comments of industry experts when they found out that the spring release date was going to

be delayed. Michael Shapcott, the director of affordable housing and social innovation at the Wellesley Institute and the co-chair of the Housing Network of Ontario said: "Poor housing is directly linked to poor health, and the delay in delivering and implementing a provincial affordable housing strategy will be costly to individuals, communities and the economy." Mr. Shapcott continued: "The Ontario government's failure to meet its own timeline underlines a concern raised by the provincial Auditor General that the housing ministry lacks the capacity to do its work. In its 2009-10 budget, the provincial government said it would match federal housing investments as a placeholder until its own housing strategy was in place. Ontario has missed the 2010-11 budget and risks losing the 2011-12 cycle as well—pushing back solutions for yet another year." This is called backtracking.

The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, which represents more than 770 non-profit housing providers across this province, was also disappointed by the delay, especially since so many Ontarians are struggling to pay their rent.

Linda Coltman from Voices from the Street said, "With this delay I'm left to wonder just how important a priority is being placed upon the ideal of helping to have everyone at their best. For people like me living with the long-term effects of poverty, we aren't asking for a hand-out but simply to be afforded with real opportunities to develop our talents and abilities. We need a step up towards our goals of self-esteem and personal and community understanding of our pasts and our living conditions."

She also said, "My personal desire and expectation is to see great leadership from the province united with all orders of government, working with all sectors and especially with those of us living in poverty, to create opportunities, remove barriers and provide much-needed supports so that all Ontarians can live with dignity."

Yutaka Dirks, co-chair of the Housing Network of Ontario, said, "McGuinty made a promise to introduce a housing strategy to help reduce poverty, but this pause means another summer of hardship for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians facing inadequate and unaffordable housing."

I questioned this government on the delay of their housing report. First, they broke into uproarious laughter, and then refused—they refused—to answer the question, other than to tell me that "affordable housing is very important in the province of Ontario." But it wasn't important enough to release the report in the spring as promised, was it?

The minister talked about how this was a "very, very important issue" and how he was "very, very proud of the consultation" and "very, very proud" of the engagement, but he didn't say anything about the release of the report and what brought on the delay.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that I was happy to hear the word "consultation" from the other side, as it is not something that we often hear or see happen. They have a long history of failed energy experiments as a result of

that—but that’s for another day. And they have a long list of other failed initiatives.

What concerns me is that they didn’t plan for the consultations to be finished and the report to be done by the planned date. They had three years; there was no need for a delay.

The minister said that his government was “ensuring that the long-term affordable housing strategy is a strategy that works for Ontarians.” Well, I’m afraid that this isn’t the plan that’s going to do that.

He said, “We’re about ensuring that we put a plan in place that is long-term ... and about ensuring that there is a housing strategy in place that works.”

Now the report has arrived and we have this new, large piece of legislation. Both the long-term affordable housing plan and the new piece of legislation will give service managers more flexibility, there’s no doubt about that. But I know that this is something that municipalities have been asking for for a long time, and they’re quite happy that they have finally received a mechanism that enables them to serve Ontarians more appropriately.

The government has actually acknowledged that one size doesn’t fit all, and that’s a good model to have for housing. Each of the service managers has different housing challenges, and as you can imagine, the challenges in the city of Toronto, for example, differ greatly from the challenges that are faced in the north and in other parts of the Golden Horseshoe.

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This piece of legislation and long-term affordable housing plan allow service managers the flexibility to use the funding for the five homelessness-related programs to best meet their own needs at home.

The current programs are as follows: First of all, there’s the consolidated homelessness prevention program. That has helped those experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find and maintain stable housing.

Then there’s the emergency energy fund program, which helps prevent homelessness by reducing the risk of householders being evicted due to energy arrears.

Then there’s the emergency hostels program, which provides for short-term lodging and a temporary personal needs allowance until an emergency situation is resolved.

We also have the domiciliary hostels program, which provides permanent housing with supports for vulnerable adults who require limited supervision and support with daily activities.

The last is the rent program, which provides outstanding rent directly to the landlords on behalf of tenants who, due to some emergency or other unforeseen circumstances, are in short-term arrears and facing eviction.

These five have been collapsed, and service managers are now able to use the money in whichever area they see fit.

Currently, these programs are allotted funding without any flexibility. This piece of legislation allows funding to flow from one program to another as the service managers see fit and if it serves their community’s needs.

I’m told that the idea is that instead of continuing to allocate money to each program separately, the ministry is working out a way to give one lump sum of funding to the service managers and then they will do the dividing. It will remain to be seen how this will work, and it is difficult to determine how long it will take before we even know if it works.

While service managers do get some flexibility with funding for these five programs, with this piece of legislation they have another responsibility. They’re also required to develop the 10-year affordable housing plan.

If this government was going to put the responsibility for the development of a housing plan on service managers, why did they wait three years to do that? This could have started three years ago. It was the responsibility of this government, a commitment that they made to develop the 10-year affordable housing plan. Then, lo and behold, they failed to develop a plan, and they have downloaded the responsibility to the service managers. As history has proven, when something goes wrong, the government will have someone else to blame. It won’t be their plan, after all.

Have they considered the administrative costs to the service managers to take on this risk? We asked whether service managers would be given any funding to offset these costs, and the answer was no. We asked if the development of these 10-year plans would increase municipal tax dollars, and the response we received was that this government isn’t requiring that property taxes go up; it would be up to the municipalities.

Well, municipalities don’t have any money either. They have nothing to ante up. Creating a plan will cost money, so, although not spoken, the government is requiring municipalities to put more tax dollars into the development of a plan that should have been their plan to develop.

This 10-year plan is quite complex. Expectations are that it establishes current and future housing needs, objectives and targets, the measures to meet the objectives and targets, and how progress will be measured. The plan is due in 2012, and it will be reviewed every five years.

We asked how service managers could be expected to develop a 10-year plan without knowing what sort of funding they’ll get. The answer was that the ministry would work with service managers as they develop their plan, and they would give them guidance as to future funding. They won’t give them funding, but they will give them guidance.

According to the ministry, municipalities won’t be required to invest money to achieve the plan targets, but they will have to show progress. How will that be done?

Would you like me to stop there?

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15, this House will stand in recess until 10:30, at which time we’ll have question period.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a number of constituents from Peterborough riding in the members' east gallery today. Ms. Janie Kelly and Mr. Dave Nickle are both teachers with the Kawartha and Pine Ridge District School Board in Peterborough. Ms. Kelly is also the president of the Peterborough OSSTF unit.

Also in the gallery today is Ms. Christina Crowley, a constituent of mine in Peterborough. She's employed with the Ministry of Government Services. I also welcome her on behalf of her minister, the Honourable Harinder Takhar.

Mr. Ted Arnott: On behalf of the member for Newmarket–Aurora, I would like to welcome representatives of the Salvation Army who are here today: Lieutenant Colonel Lee Graves, Lieutenant Colonel Ray Moulton, Major Pat Phinney, Major Neil Lewis, Captain John Murray and Captain Brenda Murray. Welcome.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the members' east gallery, please welcome two teachers from Sarnia representing the OSSTF: James Grant and Stephen Lynch.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would like to also welcome two of my constituents, Shane Restall and Mary-Jane Karkheck, who are here with OSSTF from the great Avon Maitland District School Board.

Mr. Paul Miller: In the west gallery, I'd like to welcome Chris Watson, political liaison for CUPE, and two Hamiltonians, Michelle Hrushka and Lauren Marela; they're co-chairs of the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits in Ontario.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: They're not here yet, but I want to welcome the students from Thomas Street Middle School. They're going to be performing at the visit of our 28th Governor General, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston's visit to Queen's Park at 2 o'clock.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I would like to introduce Kaley Ames from my riding of St. Paul's and her friend Tyler Golden, both of whom are joining us today to watch question period. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Dave Levac: Up in the west visitors' gallery is a very strong advocate for mental health issues and brain injury issues and a co-chair of the Drinking and Driving Countermeasures Committee in the riding of Brant, Mr. Lawrie Palk. Thank you for being here, Lawrie.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm especially delighted today to introduce to the Legislature a delegation from the People's Republic of China. They are from the Anhui province from the water resources department of Hefei City. They heard about our great policy on water resources and water safety. I'm delighted to introduce them to you: Mr. Cai, who is the deputy director; Mr. Huang, Mr. Zhou, Ms. Xu, Mr. Ji, and Mr. Zhao. Thank you very much for coming to Canada and seeing our water resources.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I would like to introduce two delegations that are with us today from the OSSTF, the

Kingston representatives Steve Newstead and David Mathers, who are here for lobby day at Queen's Park.

I'd also like to introduce two citizens from Kingston who are here to enjoy our hospitality here at Queen's Park today, Don Sinkinson and David Sinkinson.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to take the opportunity to welcome the honourable representatives of the OSSTF: Cindy Dubué, Barry Kelley, Cheryl Cavell, Barbara Hope, Julia Banks, Isabelle Cousineau, Dan Maxwell, Andrew Horwood, Carol Crocker, Susan Rab and James Wright. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. Before the government appointed Fay Booker chair of the Niagara Parks Commission, she was a partner at the accounting firm Grant Thornton.

A record of decisions made at a September 21 meeting of the Niagara Parks Commission shows that Ms. Booker handed a five-year contract to none other than Grant Thornton to be the commission's external auditor. I'm told that Ms. Booker has said that the price was not the determining factor in her decision to hand the sweetheart deal to her former firm.

Why would she say that?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question, and thank you for the opportunity to talk about the Niagara Parks Commission. There's important progress under way. We are moving forward with audits. We have a new chair in place. We have a new vice-chair in place. They are helping us to move the commission forward. They are experienced and knowledgeable. These individuals are determined to bring greater accountability and greater transparency. We are on the right track.

The agency has a responsibility to all Ontarians to be more transparent and to be more accountable. We are working hard on behalf of all Ontarians to make the commission accountable and transparent.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question was about a contract. The external auditor was supposed to be chosen through a competitive bidding process run by Fay Booker, but Ms. Booker departed from the usual procurement practices and standards and brought in the three lowest bidders for interviews. These interviews were conducted without the full commission present or even being informed.

Then Ms. Booker handpicked her former firm over a bid that was the lowest in price and another from the incumbent. So if incumbency didn't matter, as Ms. Booker has said, and if price didn't matter either, then what did matter in her decision to unilaterally hand a sweetheart contract to her former firm?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much, again, for the question. As I said, we have a chair at the commission who is steering the commission in the right direction. That individual brings significant experience—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew. Interjections at all times are not helpful, but it's certainly not helpful when he's not in his seat.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: That individual will bring significant experience in auditing and in corporate governance.

The commission is making significant progress. The commission has redefined the governance structure for board committees. The commission has developed a new code of conduct for the board and employees. The commission is consulting with residents in Niagara region through public meetings.

We are on a new direction; we are going to continue that. The commission is vital to Ontario's future: to build on our strengths, to build on tourism and to build on our economy for a stronger and more prosperous Ontario.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: Again, the question is about a contract and the minister's answer was not.

Fay Booker is the minister's handpicked appointee to clean up after a previous purge at the Niagara Parks Commission following the Maid of the Mist boondoggle. Minister Chan has repeatedly said he has confidence in her to change the culture and make the commission more accountable and transparent—he said it again today—yet she sole-sourced a \$500,000 printing contract and bypassed a competitive bidding process to hand a sweet-heart deal to her friends at her former firm.

The rules of the commission require that members disclose conflicts of interest and take no part in decisions involving friends, family or personal interests. The meeting records show that she did neither. How can Minister Chan say he has full confidence in Fay Booker now that he knows she's been caught breaking the rules for her friends?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question again.

Let me say this: The honourable member is wrong. Let me repeat again: The honourable member is wrong. There was a competitive process.

Our government is taking a responsible approach to address concerns that have been raised. There are currently audits under way. The audits cover everything from procurement practices to expenses at the commission. These audits are carried out by the finance audit team—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Simcoe North, member from Haldimand, member from Oxford, member from Halton, member from Renfrew, member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Minister?

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Hon. Michael Chan: The audit covers everything from procurement practices to expenses at the commission. These audits are carried out by our finance audit team. The audit team brings the utmost in experience and quality as they take on this important work on behalf of Ontarians.

I have full faith in the Ministry of Finance's objectivity and expertise. We are moving forward with a plan that will strengthen the commission. We are moving forward with a plan that will make it more transparent and accountable to all Ontarians.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My second question is also to the Minister of Tourism. At a time of record deficits and debt, the Premier is asking Ontario families to make sacrifices, but it gets worse. How does the minister justify Fay Booker's zealous effort to increase compensation for herself and members of the Niagara Parks Commission?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much again for the question. Tourism is an economic driver of Ontario. It contributes over \$20 billion to our economy, generating 300,000 jobs. Niagara Falls is one of Canada's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: Niagara Falls is one of Canada's most important tourism attractions. We must steer the Niagara Parks Commission in a new direction. This is why we have appointed a new chair. This is why, since the appointment, we have seen a redefined governance structure for board committees and the development of a new code of conduct. But the changes do not stop here. We are seeing changes in the way the board reviews and approves the chair's expenses, consultations with individuals across—

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm not sure if the minister is hearing my questions because he has yet to address any of the specific issues that I've raised.

Our PC caucus found a record of an October 5 Niagara Parks Commission meeting in which Fay Booker pushed to double her per diem. The minister is on record several times in this assembly—I think he's on record now 12 times—and in media reports, expressing full confidence in Ms. Booker and asserting that she will help change the culture and practices at the Niagara Parks Commission. The records we uncovered, however, suggest that Ms. Booker is more interested in helping herself double her pay.

How can Minister Chan still say that he has full confidence in Fay Booker now that he knows she's been caught breaking the rules for her friends and herself?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. I said it before, but let me repeat it again: The honourable member was wrong. There was an RFP; it was a com-

petitive process. There is important progress under way. We have a new chair in place—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew. It's not helpful from the member from Hamilton East as well.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Now with a new chair and a new vice-chair, we are moving forward with the Niagara Parks Commission. They are individuals who are determined to bring greater accountability and greater transparency. We are on the right track and moving ahead. The agency has a responsibility to all Ontarians. We are working very, very hard on behalf of all Ontarians to make the commission accountable and transparent.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: Again, I asked the minister about Fay Booker's pay. The Auditor General will release a new annual report on Monday, but it appears that the McGuinty Liberals have yet to fix the eHealth-style mess the auditor uncovered there two years ago. In eHealth, Sarah Kramer was the Premier's hand-picked appointee who was fired for handing out sweetheart deals to her friends, approving sole-source contracts handed out by others at eHealth and breaking the rules to pay herself a bonus.

Fay Booker is the minister's hand-picked appointee who, within months of being on the job, handed out a sweetheart deal to friends at her former firm, approved a half-million-dollar sole-source contract and tried to pay herself more.

Before the Premier fired Sarah Kramer, he and his health minister used to express confidence in her. Would the minister now say he has confidence in Fay Booker that is greater, the same or less than what they had in Ms. Kramer?

Hon. Michael Chan: I said it before, I repeated that before and let me repeat it one more time: The honourable member is wrong. There was an RFP. It was a competitive process.

Audits are under way. This audit will be undertaken by the Ministry of Finance audit team. They will look at everything. They will look at everything from travel, meals and hospitality expenses to procurement practices. Come January, there will be a plan in place for forensic audits by third parties.

We have a chair that is helping us move the commission forward, one that is experienced and knowledgeable in governance and auditing. We are taking action to move this commission forward and restore public confidence in this very important government agency.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. We're hearing from more and more families across Ontario who are worried about paying the bills. Beverley Soranno from Mississauga writes: "I am a single parent

living from paycheque to paycheque and I have just become aware of a 46% increase in hydro over the next few years. My salary is not increased to offset this amount."

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sorry, Speaker. They're calling this woman a liar; I'm quoting directly from her: "My salary is not increased to offset this amount. Where does one find the money?"

That's a good question. That's exactly my question to this Premier. Where will Ms. Soranno and people like her find the money?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. It's an opportunity again to speak directly to Ontarians about our long-term energy plan.

First of all, I want to reassure them that we in fact have one; the opposition parties do not. Secondly, I want to say that it's devoted to ensuring that Ontario families have access to clean air, new jobs and reliable electricity.

Beyond that, there's been some great news this week that speaks directly to that jobs matter. Just yesterday in Windsor, there was a great announcement there attended by my colleagues on my right and my left here. We've opened up a wind tower manufacturing plant. It is 300 new full-time jobs, up to 400 construction and service jobs. The plant will use 100% Ontario steel; that's 200,000 tonnes of domestic steel with a value of \$140 million. I think that's good news for all families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Keeping the house warm and the lights on is becoming a lot more expensive and so is driving to work in the morning. In fact, gas prices shot up over 4 cents a litre across Ontario last night and they're heading towards \$1.20 a litre by the holidays, all compounded by the Premier's HST. Where are people supposed to find the extra money to pay the bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague and Ontarians as well about the desperate state we found ourselves in in past years when it comes to electricity. The IESO—consider them the watchdog for electricity—issued 19 public appeals in 2002 and 2003 alone, warning Ontarians to lower their electricity demands. In 2010, after all the work we have done together with Ontarians, after one of the hottest summers in recent memory, the IESO said Ontario is "in the best supply situation in a decade as a result of the new generation and transmission"—infrastructure—"added over the past five years."

We recognize that there are real costs associated with this massive investment in new generation and new transmission. That's why we've said we're going ahead with our clean energy benefit. It's a 10% reduction in all electricity bills during the course of the next five years and that speaks directly to the needs raised by my honourable colleague.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Incomes are not going up, but thanks to this Premier the bills are. Tracy King's husband

lost his job. A mother of two, she's working as much as she can to support her family. In fact, she's got two jobs, but they're barely scraping by on her minimum wages. She writes: "How do you afford to feed, clothe and pay utilities that just keep increasing? Not to mention the humiliation that is experienced when you inform your children that there will be no Christmas because of the economy."

How are people like Ms. King and her family going to get by?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague made reference to a family which has suffered a job loss. I think one of the most important things that we can do for our families is ensure they have access to good, well-paying jobs. I want to tell you a little bit about our long-term energy plan and the good influence it's been having in that regard.

My honourable colleague knows that in Hamilton, three weeks ago, we announced 300 clean energy jobs. A few days ago in Cambridge, we announced—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew was interjecting so much that he did not hear the Speaker warning him.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In Hamilton two weeks ago, we announced 300 green energy jobs. A few days ago in Cambridge, it was 150. Two days ago in Essex county, it was 126. Yesterday in Windsor, it was 400 construction jobs, 300 full-time jobs. Today in Tillsonburg, it's 300 jobs, plus 600 construction jobs.

Every single day, we're creating more jobs as a result of our long-term energy policy. We think that's what families want to hear.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Families facing uncertain times need to know affordable, reliable health care is there when they need it.

While this government asks people to pay more than ever before, they keep seeing cuts to their local hospitals. Documents from the Ontario Physiotherapy Association show that, since 2008, 27 hospital outpatient physiotherapy clinics have been gutted.

My question is, can the Premier explain to families in these 27 communities why the cuts just keep coming?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think, by any objective measure, health care just keeps getting better in the province of Ontario.

We're not laying any claim to perfection, but I can say, for example, that we're building 18 new hospitals. We've hired 10,000 more nurses. We've hired 2,900 more doctors. One million more Ontarians now have access to a family doctor. Wait times are down in every-

thing from MRIs to CTs to cataracts to cancer care to cardiac care to hip and knee surgery.

The fact of the matter is, by any objective assessment, health care is getting better. There's always more work to be done, and we look forward to doing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't know who the Premier is talking to, but the people who I'm talking to are telling me they're frustrated. They're constantly asked to pay more, and they see that the money is being spent on everything from corporate tax cuts to consultant vacations in Japan.

When these hospital services are gutted, people are forced to pay for physiotherapy out of their own pocket, leaving many to simply go without physiotherapy.

Why is the McGuinty government cutting preventive health care, a decision that will ultimately drive up health care costs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to be very direct to that question: We're not. We're not cutting that. The fact of the matter is we continue to make tremendous new investments in health care in Ontario.

I'm just going to repeat: One million more people have a family doctor. More than five million Ontarians now have an electronic medical record. We're tracking wait times, and surgery wait times are down. Over 10,000 new nurses have been hired. There are 8,384 new long-term-care beds. We're building 18 new hospitals. We cut the price of generic drugs in half, and that's especially important for the one-million-plus Ontarians who are paying for those generic drugs out of pocket.

Again, there's always more work to be done, but I want to reassure my honourable colleague and the people of Ontario that we continue to invest more, not less. We continue to get more and not less.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When this government introduced their family health teams, physiotherapy was supposed to be part of this primary care model. Yet today, not a single family health team has received funding for physiotherapy.

For elderly people, access to physiotherapy prevents falls and increases their quality of life. Physiotherapy is essential when you break a bone, when you're in chronic pain or when you experience an injury. Yet today, Ontario is rapidly losing access to these services.

Is the Premier finally ready to re-evaluate his government's faulty model or will Ontarians continue to suffer from inadequate access to physiotherapy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm just being provided information on the fly here, Speaker, by my very capable Minister of Health.

I just want to say we're very proud of the fact that we've put in place 200 family health teams. They are wonderful new creations. They've taken on, so far, some three million Ontario patients; many of those had no access to family health care before.

They are an interdisciplinary model, which means, basically, from a patient's perspective, it's one-stop shopping. You can see a doctor, a nurse practitioner, a nurse, a nutritionist, a counsellor, and some of those have in fact hired on physiotherapists. We're now providing, by the way, on the physiotherapy front, through OHIP, OHIP-funded physiotherapy to approximately 138,000 seniors annually.

Again, we're making progress; there's more to be done, and we aim to do it.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Peter Shurman: Again, to the Minister of Tourism, and we'll keep questioning Minister Chan until he gives us a proper answer.

In addition to handpicking friends at her former firm to provide so-called external oversight of the Niagara Parks Commission, Fay Booker ensured a friend was handed the contract to oversee the competition for boat tours at Niagara Falls. The sweetheart deal was worth \$50,000 and was handed to Peter Van Kessel, a consultant and friend of hers from Burlington.

How can you still have full confidence in Fay Booker?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question again. Let me repeat: That went through a competitive process, and the honourable member is wrong.

Chair Fay Booker is a strong asset for the commission. She brings extensive experience in corporate governance, accounting and auditing to her position. Chair Booker has already addressed these allegations and set the record straight in the Niagara Falls Review. She has my full confidence and support to take all the necessary action to bring greater accountability and transparency to the Niagara Parks Commission.

Since her appointment earlier this year, Chair Booker has initiated a number of important changes to processes at the commission. These changes will lead to a more open and transparent organization that will instill public confidence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I think you'd better be expanding that accountability act.

At an October 12 meeting, the Niagara Parks Commission learned that Mr. Van Kessel went over budget. Following in step with another mistake from eHealth, Ms. Booker and the commission simply hiked the \$50,000 ceiling for his consulting services.

The Ontario PC caucus tried to warn you about Fay Booker when you were appointing her earlier this year. At the public appointments committee hearings, we told you her ties to Burlington would be a problem, as would her ties to the Liberal Party. You didn't listen, and now either her governance style or Liberal pedigree has allowed eHealth-style rot to spread deeper into the Niagara Parks Commission.

Is the only way to deal with the rot and cronyism to change government?

Hon. Michael Chan: Our government is very, very committed and serious about openness in governance. Our government is taking a responsible approach to address the concerns that have been raised, and there are currently audits under way. The audits cover everything from procurement practices to expenses at the commission. These audits are carried out by our finance audit team. The audit team brings the utmost in experience and quality as they take on this important work on behalf of all Ontarians. I have full confidence in the ministry's financial objectivity and expertise.

We are moving forward with the Niagara Parks Commission.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Toronto families have been waiting patiently for improved public transit so that that the morning commute to work and school doesn't take so long and so they can get home in the evening to enjoy dinner together.

Fifteen years ago, these families saw a previous provincial government kill Eglinton transit. Is the Premier going to subserviently sit back and let the same thing happen under his watch?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that we have been strong advocates for public transit and that we have made an investment in public transit that is the biggest investment in a generation, and we want to see that plan go forward.

But the reality is that the local democratic process has taken place in the city of Toronto. A new council and a new mayor have been elected, and I think that the member opposite would understand that that council and that mayor have to have an opportunity to talk about what they would like to present as a go-forward position. Obviously, we are very concerned if there is to be waste—there's money that has been invested in the current projects—but the council has to determine what it would like to present as its go-forward plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Premier is from Ottawa, so he is familiar with the impact of scuttled transit plans. Families there waited and waited while governments dithered and change their minds. Here in Toronto, we are bracing for the same. Hundreds of Thunder Bay workers and their families are being left to twist in the wind, wondering if they'll have work. When can people in Toronto and Thunder Bay expect the Premier to show some backbone and finally get better public transit built, in particular on Eglinton Avenue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite has consistently stood in this House and advocated against the air-rail link from Union Station to Pearson airport. The member opposite's seatmate was the former mayor of East York. He stood in the House yesterday and

argued against local democracy. I can remember a time when the Conservatives were in power in this province. I did a TV show with the member from Beaches–East York, and he made a very strong argument for honouring council's decisions and honouring the mayors that were duly elected.

We are very committed to public transit. We have made billions of dollars of investments and we want to see the plan go forward, but we are going to continue to work with the elected representatives of the city of Toronto and the entire region of the GTHA.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, while action to address pollution is a global effort, residents in my riding are doing simple things around the house and in their community to conserve energy, like buying programmable thermostats, taking public transit and turning off the lights. We have one of the highest public transit usages in the city of Ottawa at over 30%.

They know this saves them money on their energy bills and helps protect the environment, but they also want to see the McGuinty government continue its leadership in developing policies—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To the Minister of Consumer Services, the Minister of Transportation and the honourable member for Trinity–Spadina: Take it outside. There's a question being asked.

Please continue.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker.

They also want to see the McGuinty government continue its leadership in developing policies that conserve energy and reduce emissions.

Minister, my question is simple: Is conservation still part of the government's energy mix to protect the air we breathe?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Absolutely, because the McGuinty government understands that we need to have a sustainable environment and a sustainable economy. As the economy recovers from the global recession, we expect that companies will see the economic and environmental benefits of investing in new technologies to help them conserve and reduce their costs. In the meantime, the McGuinty government's conservation efforts have already saved some 1,700 megawatts over the last five years alone. That's like taking the entire city of Scarborough off the grid. I'm pleased to say that in our recently released long-term energy plan, we have committed to an ambitious target of some 7,100 megawatts of energy conservation by 2030.

The focus on energy conservation will remain. Our focus on making sure that we have reliable sources of energy, clean sources of energy—I want you to know that the best thing is not to flip on the light, but if you do, it's reliable and it's clean.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: That's certainly good news. I'm confident that my residents' practical conservation actions around the House and this government's commitment to conservation will make sure we have cleaner air to breathe and jobs for our children.

But conservation is only one part of the supply mix. While my constituents in Ottawa–Orléans are committed to ensuring a cleaner Ontario, they are concerned about going back to failed energy policies of the previous government. While it is clear that wind, solar, hydro and nuclear are the better alternatives to coal, I think you can agree that actions speak louder than words.

Minister, with many Tory members suggesting that clean coal is the way to go, will the McGuinty government really eliminate coal from our energy mix?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Let's be clear: On this side of the House, we believe that clean coal is an oxymoron. As Gideon Forman of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment wrote, "Burning coal always creates poisons. There is simply no getting around this. Hence the danger in fossil fuel combustion is intrinsic—the technology cannot be made safe."

Coal plants emit lead; mercury; dioxins; chromium; arsenic, which is a carcinogen; nitrogen oxide; and sulphur dioxide, which causes acid rain. Those are the scientific facts. I don't want that getting into our air, and neither do Ontario families. That's why our reliance on dirty coal so far is down 70% and we're driving it down to 0% by 2014 and closing down those dirty coal-fired plants.

We'll continue to conserve energy, but it's important when we flip on the lights that the source of that energy is intrinsically clean.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. For several years the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Niagara Falls, was aware of the problems at the Niagara Parks Commission. Former commission member Italia Gilberti even brought her concerns about Fay Booker, the chair, to his doorstep, and by extension, to the minister's doorstep. Everything Ms. Gilberti has said to the media about Fay Booker is backed up by the commission's own records, yet the minister and the parliamentary assistant just tried to sweep the whole mess under the rug. In fact, the member for Niagara Falls told Ms. Gilberti to keep her head down and she would be given another three-year appointment.

Does Minister Chan think it is acceptable for his parliamentary assistant to be doling out public appointments just to buy someone's secrecy?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You are impugning motive, and I'd ask that you withdraw that last comment, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdrawn.

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

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question.

Our government is committed to transparency and openness. As I said before, there is an audit process currently under way. This audit will be undertaken by the Ministry of Finance. They will look at everything from meals to travel and hospitality expenses to procurement practices. Also, come January, there will be a plan in place to conduct a forensic audit by a third party.

We have a chair who is helping us to move forward, one who is experienced and knowledgeable in governance and auditing. We are taking action to move this commission in a new direction to restore public confidence in this important agency.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Even with all the proof that the new chair, Fay Booker, can't fix a culture she is a part of, the minister sticks by her as his choice to change the culture of the Niagara Parks Commission.

The parliamentary assistant, the member for Niagara Falls, said of the first wave of scandalous spending, "This is devastating to me. The taxpayer has to know that ... money is being spent wisely."

Well, the parliamentary assistant must have given that quote on the golf course, because freedom-of-information records reveal that he took advantage of 158 rounds of free golf on Niagara Parks Commission courses in recent years. In fact, he arranged for 506 people to play rounds of golf for free, in addition to his free golf.

Minister, did your parliamentary assistant give a reason why he didn't tell you about the problems at the commission, or do you think he said nothing so that he could keep his free golf?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much, again, for the question.

We have a chair at the commission who is steering the commission in a new direction, and the commission is making significant progress. The commission has re-defined the governance structure for board committees. The commission has developed a new code of conduct for boards and employees. The commission is consulting with residents in Niagara region in full public meetings.

We are moving ahead. We are going to continue building. The commission is vital to Ontario's future, to build on our strengths, to build on tourism and to build on our economy for a stronger Ontario.

1110

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the finance minister. Before the last election, the Premier said, "The downloading of [social assistance] programs stands as one of the worst misjudgements of the previous government." He went on to say, "They've been a burden to every municipality and we're taking them back in full."

The community and social services website clearly indicates that the province will pay half the administration costs for Ontario Works. My question is: Why is the government refusing to pay the outstanding \$53.7-million

share of welfare administration costs to the city of Toronto?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I welcome the question. Yes, we're very proud that we are uploading the total cost of OW. We're very proud of what we've done to upload the cost of public health. We're very proud of what we've done to upload the cost of ODSP and the obvious savings that will afford municipalities so they can in turn invest that money in important municipal services. We're very proud that we signed the provincial-municipal service delivery review and especially proud that even in spite of the enormous challenges to our books, we are continuing to implement that in its entirety, according to the time-lines that were laid out and agreed to.

This government is all about that. It's about respecting municipal property taxpayers, it's about working with our municipal partners. I remain confident that the approach we're taking is the right one for our municipalities and certainly the right one for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: With all that was said by the finance minister, he never once said that he will honour the government's commitment to pay the \$53.7 million that is outstanding.

As far back as last February, the city of Toronto, in its analyst briefing notes, set out what was expected to come from the provincial government. Now, the provincial government is challenging that and they're saying they're not going to pay.

The government had an agreement with the outgoing city council to cover half of the administrative costs of Ontario Works for 2010. It is failing to honour that agreement. There is a new council in place and they need to know whether or not that money is forthcoming.

Will the minister put an end to the government's foot-dragging now and pay the full \$53 million that this government owes to the city of Toronto?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This year, right here in Toronto, we have already uploaded \$136 million. For that member's constituents, it means lower property taxes, it means better public services and it means access to better public services. That's what it's all about.

We are currently discussing with Toronto the accurate amount of costs associated with that. As I indicated publicly, we remain committed. We have meetings going on as we speak, and I look forward to a satisfactory resolution for all people with respect to this. I only wish you and your party had supported us as we lowered property taxes for Torontonians.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, everybody knows that Ontario's roads rank among the safest in North America. This is due to some of the very important initiatives the government has taken recently, like the requirement of a zero blood alcohol concentration for drivers 21 years of age and under; and also the graduated licences.

Despite all these initiatives, we still have a lot of things to do in order to make sure the people of Ontario drive safe. I was reading the other day that statistics show that three quarters of drivers who have their licences suspended are still driving in the province of Ontario, which causes a lot of harm for many people across the province.

Can you tell us, Minister, what you are going to do to deal with this very important issue and to make sure all the people who are suspended cannot drive in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is that there are too many people who have their driver's licence suspended who still get in their cars and drive, so we believe that we need to take strong action. Starting yesterday, December 1, if someone is caught driving with a suspended licence due to a serious Highway Traffic Act violation, or for chronic non-payment of family support, or with a blood alcohol level of over 0.08, or if they're supposed to have an ignition interlock and they don't—in any one of those situations, their car can now be impounded at the side of the road for seven days.

People who choose to drive with a suspended licence or who have been caught with their blood alcohol over the legal limit are breaking the law. We believe there needs to be a serious deterrent in place. These new penalties will help get people off the road who should not be driving because their drivers' licences have been suspended.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Minister. Over the past week, I've received many calls to my constituency office in London–Fanshawe asking about the announcement as it relates to the Family Responsibility Office and individuals paying family support. At the end of the day, we need to make sure money that is rightfully owed to children and their families gets to them. However, impounding someone's car for being late or missing one payment is not acceptable, Minister.

Can you tell me how you can deal with this and when the responsibility office can exercise that right? Can you explain this to my constituents and my people, because they ask me on a regular basis?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm too quick this morning.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: She's eager.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes.

First of all, let me say that vehicles will only be impounded from people driving illegally because their licence has been suspended.

FRO initiates a driver's licence suspension because the payer is continually in arrears in their family support, not that they missed one payment.

Our first priority is getting the money owed to the children and families. We've suspended over 31,000

drivers' licences since 2003, which resulted in \$665 million getting to families.

Just yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition said that more needed to be done at FRO. Our government has increased funding to FRO by 51% since 2003—

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

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. On November 1 this year, the Minister of Energy seemed confused when asked a direct question from Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak regarding your \$53-million hidden hydro tax and a possible similar tax to be levied on natural gas customers. The very next day, he said no taxes would be imposed and that the \$53-million backdoor energy tax grab, also known as the special purposes fund, would be gone. The minister didn't keep his word, and your Attorney General continued to defend your power to collect these hidden taxes.

I know you're trying to confuse Ontario families, so how about keeping your word on this one? Stand in your place, do the right thing and repeal section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act. Assure Ontario families that the backdoor energy tax will be gone and that you will no longer be able to impose new ones. Will you do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague is talking about our effort to support conservation programs in Ontario. I will happily contrast our long-term energy plan with their absence of any plan. I'll also happily contrast our record when it comes to promoting conservation with their record, where they didn't promote conservation at all.

They tell us that Ontarians are not interested in conservation, but when we put forward our home energy savings program, almost 400,000 Ontario families took advantage of the audit program; 250,000 have then helped themselves with our energy savings and retrofits program.

They're against conservation programs. We understand that. We put something out before the people of Ontario, and 400,000 said, "Where can we sign on?"

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, families will try anything to get some relief from the burden that you're inflicting on them with your hydro policies. Families and electricity consumers in this province cannot—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Judge not.

The Minister of Agriculture will please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance.

Please continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Families and electricity consumers in this province simply cannot afford your increases to the cost of hydro. The Minister of Energy said he'd be doing away with the \$53-million tax, but it's still on the books.

Premier, if you can't stand in your place and say the right thing and do the right thing, I'm going to help you. Today, I will be introducing a bill that, if passed, will remove section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, thereby giving Ontario families a break, the break they so badly need.

Premier, this is a bill that can help Ontario families. Will you support it?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I felt a disturbance in the Force. I think there may be an inkling of some kind of a proposal put forward by a representative of the Conservative Party, and we look forward to seeing that.

But let me tell you again, they have no energy plan. They claim that they're on the side of ratepayers who are concerned, legitimately, about costs going up. Yesterday, they had a very clear opportunity to stand up in favour of families, farmers and small businesses when we voted on our clean energy benefit, which will reduce electricity bills by 10% over the course of the next five years. When presented with a very specific opportunity to stand up in favour of people who are concerned about rates, they voted against that.

Not only do they not have a plan they can put before the people of Ontario, but when it comes to seizing an opportunity to help families, farmers and small businesses, they said no.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier is not answering questions in this Legislature about the revelations of financial improprieties at the Niagara Parks Commission, even though it's clear that he personally is no stranger to the issue. At least one Niagara Parks commissioner received a letter from the Premier, congratulating him on a job well done, a few weeks before he was fired.

Why won't the Premier call in the Auditor General to investigate allegations of wrongdoings at the Niagara Parks Commission?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. We must steer the Niagara Parks Commission in a new direction. This is why we appointed a new chair back in April of this year. This is why, in June of this year, we appointed a new vice-chair. Since the appointments, we have seen a redefined governance structure in both committees, and development of a new code of conduct.

But the changes do not stop here. We are seeing changes in the way—consultations with individuals across the Niagara region, through public meetings; restructuring

the commission's operations; and implementation of the recommendations from the governance review.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Judging by the Premier's refusal to answer the question and the minister's response, I'll take it that the answer is no.

Families are tired of hearing about scandal at this public organization, an organization with an important public mandate. Today's Globe and Mail quotes a former senior bureaucrat, saying the internal government audit is "unacceptable" and "a conflict of interest."

Today, New Democrats are sending a letter to the Auditor General, asking specifically for his office to open up an investigation. Will we have the Premier's support on this effort?

Hon. Michael Chan: The leader of the third party is chasing allegations, not facts. Let me quote from the honourable member: "The forgery allegation... should be forwarded to the police."

The audit relating to that allegation found no forgery. The leader of the third party is riding on unfounded allegations. The member is dead wrong, and the individual raising that concern is also dead wrong. Instead of chasing false allegations, the member should focus on the facts. The member should focus on the findings.

We have a plan to move forward and build a stronger Niagara Parks Commission. We are focused on getting to the bottom of the matter. This is why we are moving forward with audits of expenses and procurements.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today marks an important day in my community of Peterborough and many other communities, not only in Ontario but around the world. Today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Communities everywhere are celebrating with events and promoting the need to empower people with disabilities.

There are many individuals in my community who once resided in a provincially run institution. I, like many others, was proud to be part of the latest institution closing here in Ontario.

What must we do to continue to improve the lives of those with disabilities in communities throughout the great province of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci au membre de Peterborough for his question. I know that he was very supportive in helping us to close the institution.

Today, I invite all members to join me in recognizing the contributions that people with disabilities bring to our community. Proudly, Ontario is making a positive difference in many ways. In 2004, we decided to overhaul our developmental services system, a transformation that responds to a need for services and supports that will allow people with developmental disabilities to achieve their goals and enjoy a real sense of belonging.

Today, we are going beyond traditional ways of supporting individuals with developmental disabilities by encouraging a range of opportunities that will help them connect with their communities. This approach encourages families to stay together and provides the opportunity for people with developmental disabilities to build meaningful partnerships in their own communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I believe, too, that by working together, we can foster a society that will be both inclusive and empowering to those with disabilities. Clearly, our government has taken the right steps in creating this.

It appears that by 2031, almost 50% of Ontarians will have some kind of disability, and for the first time, people older than 55 will outnumber children aged zero to 14.

What can we tell those 1.85 million people in Ontario who have a disability about what this government is doing to improve accessibility and promote opportunity for people with disabilities?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: In 2005, our government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, with the full support of every member in this House.

As baby boomers grow older, their demand for accessible services in all areas of everyday life will increase.

This year, the broader public sector met their requirements under the first accessibility standard for customer service. In 2012, the private and not-for-profit sector will follow. This past fall, my ministry put forward our integrated accessibility regulation for public review, and we received over 100 comments. We are reviewing these comments and look forward to presenting the integrated regulation in the new year.

I'm proud to say that our province will become a leader in accessibility. Other provinces and jurisdictions around the world—

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

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Minister, your auto insurance reforms aren't working. You offered consumers a choice: Pay the most for the least, and you did nothing to tackle the real fraud in the system. We hear that the industry is applying for rate increases as we speak.

Minister, medical rehab costs are a big part of the problem, and the only way to be sure that legitimate assessments are being undertaken is to put health care practitioners—doctors—back into the equation. In fact, FSCO advised you to do this. Why did you not take FSCO's advice?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Actually, the number of people, according to the Insurance Brokers Association, accessing consumer choice has gone up in some instances by 25%.

I had a chance to meet with leading representatives of the industry, who report that the new policy, the new plan,

is starting to work, and they're optimistic that it will help keep rates down for consumers. For seven years we have done that. We replaced a government that allowed rates to go up—I think it was 40%—when they were there.

We're fighting fraud. We're working with consumers. We're building a new system that will give greater protection to all Ontarians at a fair price. I look forward to working with the insurance industry and with consumer groups to continue to build on the progress we've made in the last seven years, and I welcome the support of the opposition—

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

Mr. Norm Miller: Back to the minister: The people out there paying the bills disagree with you. Listen to what one of them has to say:

"Mr. Miller, I want to point out that my car insurance has gone up almost 30%, while my coverage has been decreased by 50%. What can I, as a citizen, do to express my shock?"

"A letter I received from my insurers tells me the Ontario government allowed these increases. Along with the increased taxes due to HST being spread to many new items, my spending dollar is less and less. You can be sure that as a senior citizen my income is not going up to match this."

1130

Minister, with your auto insurance reforms, people are paying more and getting less. When are Ontario drivers going to find some real relief?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I welcome the opportunity to continue to build on our success of keeping the rate of growth in automobile insurance premiums to among the lowest in the country.

No doubt some people will see rising premiums. It's difficult when the member refuses and has a secret letter and he won't share names, actual histories and so on; they can play those games.

What we will continue to do is work for all Ontarians to build a better system with lower rates, get fraud out of the system and continue to offer rates and premiums that are among the most competitive now in the country, having undone the damage that he and his partner did to this industry and this sector in Ontario in the years that they were in office.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. I'm extremely disappointed with Siemens' decision to take its operations to southwestern Ontario. We all know that Hamilton has a well-developed transportation system and a highly skilled workforce ready to work tomorrow. We have the facilities in place, ready for quick retrofit, with a natural water port to transport 50-metre long blades to all parts of Ontario.

Why has this Premier again failed Hamilton's unemployed and highly skilled workforce?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let's just take a gander at what it is we have been able to do in partnership with the good people of Hamilton. Just recently, it was the Max Aicher announcement: 300 high-value jobs in Hamilton; a couple of weeks ago, it was JNE Consulting: 300 new jobs; in the last two years, \$130 million in infrastructure stimulus investment in Hamilton: 2,900 jobs.

We're going to go ahead with the Pan Am Games in 2015. We're going to invest \$150 million in Hamilton. There's going to be a new 15,000-seat stadium, a new velodrome, a new Olympic-sized pool at McMaster: 1,750 jobs.

I think we've done a lot working with Hamilton, and we look forward to doing much more in the days to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: My numbers are a little different. The Liberals claim to work—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Finance, Minister of Economic Development, member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Please continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: The Liberals claim to work with the CAW, whose president Ken Lewenza was very, very clear: He wants the jobs at Siemens in Hamilton. Our hundreds of locked-out steelworkers could easily produce the steel for these wind turbines.

The Max Aicher jobs the Premier mentioned, those 300 jobs were dealt with three years ago; they're not new jobs and not due to—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: That's nonsense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development, the honourable member is trying to ask a question. It's a question to your Premier, who is sitting right next to you, and I want your Premier to be able to hear the question that's coming.

Please continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker.

And the JNE jobs he was bragging about won't happen for two years, and they're minimum-paying jobs.

Hamilton has lost 20,000 jobs since 2004. Who was in government in 2004? That's when you started.

Will this Premier plan to recover the still 19,000 jobs we've lost?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I just want to say, having been in Hamilton last Thursday, to see the look of pride on those workers who were US steelworkers who had been laid off for years, in mills closed for months and months, watching—

Mr. Paul Miller: Load of garbage. Load of garbage. How do you like it? Load of garbage.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have a large landfill site in my riding—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: That's where he belongs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No; that's not helpful.

The honourable member, you just asked the question, and as I supported you in asking your question, I would now appreciate if you would listen to the answer from the minister.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Most appropriate, Speaker. Thank you.

I saw the looks on those faces when I was in Hamilton on Thursday, looks of pride that they will have great-paying jobs once again in Hamilton. We welcome Max Aicher to—

Mr. Paul Miller: Baloney.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: I just warned you about listening.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's hard to resist—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, we're all honourable members, and that's not helpful.

The time for question period has ended.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Rick Johnson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to correct my record from November 23. During the adjournment debate, I stated that there were only seven new councillors in Simcoe county. That statement was incorrect.

The point I intended to make was that most of the 32 mayors and deputy mayors who will serve on the new Simcoe county council—indeed, all but seven of them—already currently serve as councillors for their respective towns and townships in Simcoe county. My apologies to the House for the error.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's a point of order. He can correct his record.

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Finance, in his response to me, implied that the letter that I provided in my question was a "secret letter," when in fact this is a real letter from a real constituent, which we've already referred to him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, and I would encourage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

I would encourage the honourable member to forward his letter, his correspondence, to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In my question to the Minister of Tourism about the Peter Van Kessel boat tour contract, the minister provided clearly incorrect information about the contract being competitive when it was in fact sole-sourced. I would expect the minister to apologize to this House—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member, and I am sure the minister, if he has erred, will correct his record. As well, the honourable member knows that if he is not satisfied with an answer he can call the minister for a late show.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Wellington–Halton Hills has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Tourism concerning the Niagara Parks Commission. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Simcoe–Grey has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Tourism concerning the Niagara Parks Commission. The matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010LOI DE 2010 SUR
LA RESPONSABILISATION
DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

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

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On November 30, Ms. Smith moved third reading of Bill 122. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol
Albanese, Laura	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Arthurs, Wayne	Hampton, Howard	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Oraziotti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Johnson, Rick	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Savoline, Joyce
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Shurman, Peter
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dunlop, Garfield	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 57; the nays are 15.

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

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

Third reading agreed to.

TICKET SPECULATION
AMENDMENT ACT, 2010LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS
DE SPECTACLE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

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

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On December 1, Mr. Phillips moved third reading of Bill 172. All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol
Albanese, Laura	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Arthurs, Wayne	Hampton, Howard	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Oraziotti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Johnson, Rick	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Shurman, Peter
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Wilson, Jim
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Chudleigh, Ted	Munro, Julia	Yakubski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Savoline, Joyce	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 14.

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

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

Third reading agreed to.

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to inform the House that the Minister of Finance responded to my secret letter on November 9.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. That is not a point of order.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe–Grey on a point of privilege, of which he gave due notice.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I do rise on a point of privilege. The issue arises from a contempt of the Legislature that was demonstrated in the distribution of Liberal election-style pamphlets during business hours on last Tuesday morning. While the pamphlets were apparently paid for by the Ontario Liberal Party, a November 30, 2010, article published in the *Toronto Star* confirms they were handed out by members of this House and their political aides. I have reason to believe that the political staff that handed out the material included individuals who are not paid by the Ontario Liberal caucus but rather are paid staff from ministers' offices. As such, the advertising blitz was supported by resources made available by the executive branch.

I believe it's clear on the face of the advertisement that I sent to you, Mr. Speaker, that the material publishes the Premier's assertion of "10% off your hydro bill." This promotes a proposed government program as if it were a foregone conclusion and that it has the approval of this assembly; it does not. Moreover, the information contradicts what members of the assembly were last told in the fall economic statement, namely that Premier McGuinty will be making Ontario families pay 46% more for hydro rates, not a 10% cut, which we know now is not quite correct.

In my respectful view, the facts of this advertising blitz mirror those that were before Speaker Curling, when he found a contempt of the assembly on February 22, 2005. According to Speaker Curling, "The minister appears to have made an announcement, outside the House, that anticipates a bill and a budgetary measure. But there is nothing wrong with anticipation per se—it happens a lot; the issue is whether the announcement goes further and reflects adversely on the parliamentary process."

It's also similar to the facts which led Speaker Stockwell's ruling of January 22, 1997. He was asked to rule on various advertisements and pamphlets and whether they constituted a breach of privilege. He concluded that a pamphlet that was written in such a way that the government program was a foregone conclusion was a contempt of the House.

I refer to Marleau and Camille Montpetit, a 2000 edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, which says, "Any conduct which offends the authority or dignity of the House, even though no breach of any specific privilege may have been committed, is referred to as a contempt of the House. Contempt may be an act or an omission; it does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a member, it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results."

I also refer to Speaker Sauvé's ruling in 1980 that said, "While our privileges are defined, contempt of the

House has no limits. When new ways are found to interfere with our proceedings, so too will the House, in appropriate cases, be able to find that a contempt of the House has occurred."

As with the facts leading to those rulings where contempt was found, the advertisement in this instance announces a bill as fact. This shows that the advertising did not respect parliamentary procedure, as Bill 135, the legislation the so-called discount refers to, was still in second reading. It's not quite correct information for the public to assume that this is approved government policy, thereby circumventing the rules of the House and showing contempt for the parliamentary process.

The material in question was distributed to the public by at least one person I believe to be government, not caucus, staff. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that this assembly should be allowed to consider the distribution of this questionable material by government caucus members, its staff and their staff during a day when the House was in session. I believe that is captured by previous rulings. Thank you.

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

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue of privilege, which is unfounded and in fact almost specious in its assertions by the member for Simcoe–Grey. In fact, he refers to precedents which he says back his claims, and which in fact don't. I will take you through, just ever so briefly, his submissions.

First off, one of his submissions is that the election-style pamphlets set out—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Don't show it.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I won't show it, but I do have to refer to it because he did refer to the content and stated that the content was unequivocal in setting out that the government would provide 10% off hydro bills for families. In fact, if you look at it, as he has submitted it to you and I know you will take the time to look at it, it states that "only Ontario Liberals have a plan for a clean, reliable, and affordable electricity system," and then it enunciates what our plan is:

"—a new, clean energy industry and 50,000 good new jobs;

"—shutting down all dirty, smog-producing coal plants;

"—expanding clean, renewable sources of energy like wind and solar;

"—10% off hydro bills for families and small businesses;

"—conservation programs that work and save you more money."

That is our plan, as outlined in the brochure, and the brochure is paid for by the Ontario Liberal Party, not by this precinct or this Legislative Assembly.

It also sets out that the Conservatives could barely keep the lights on; that deregulation led to wild price spikes just when we needed power most; that they oppose new jobs from clean energy and that they still support dirty coal, which pollutes the air our children breathe.

The second part of the pamphlet, which the member from Simcoe has also submitted to you, clearly states, "Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals want to lower your hydro bills by 10%." It does not, in fact, state that we are; it says that we want to. It also goes on to say—and I think this is actually the seminal line in this document—"We're proposing to give your family a 10% reduction in your electricity bills, starting January 1, 2011."

It clearly states in Speaker Stockwell's ruling of January 1997, where he was dealing with an issue of contempt of advertising that members raised, that they believed was in contempt of the Legislature, "In my opinion, they convey the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was not necessary"—this is on the actual ruling that he was making. He goes on to say, "I would not have come to this view had these claims or proposals—and that is all they are—been qualified by a statement that they would only become law if and when the Legislature gave its stamp of approval to them."

It is clear in this case, where he did find a *prima facie* case of contempt, that had there been qualifying language, he would not have. He's very clear on that.

He also discussed the fact that he does "express some personal concerns about the propriety of public funds being used to advocate, through advertising, a particular position on a matter that is before the" Legislature. He goes on to say, "I am not speaking here about politically paid for advertising, but rather about funds that are contributed to by every Ontarian." In fact, it is very clear.

Again, I will not show the document, but it is very clear that it is funded by the Liberal Party and provided by the Liberal Party on both sides of the documents that were handed out.

There are also some other precedents that are referred to and I just want to speak very briefly about Speaker Curling's ruling in February 2005, where he discussed an announcement that was raised by the member for Oak Ridges, a letter that was sent by the then Minister of Education, Mr. Kennedy. In his ruling, Speaker Curling notes that "there is nothing wrong with anticipation per se." I believe that my colleague actually said that in his submissions today and it is clear in these documents that they are anticipatory.

Mr. Curling went on to say, "In my opinion, the wording and the tone of the documents are not dismissive of the legislative role of the House. On the contrary, they indicate that the government had plans and proposals that require not only negotiation, but also the introduction and passage of legislation. In particular, the board letter and press release contain conditional phrases such as 'intends to introduce legislation,' 'we are proposing,' and 'legislation that, if passed,'" again mirroring the type of comments that are made in the brochure that was put out by the Liberal Party.

In this case, Mr. Curling actually found that a *prima facie* case of contempt had not been established. I believe in his letter the member for Simcoe refers to it as establishing a *prima facie* case, so I would just highlight that for you.

There are other precedents I would refer you to, particularly one that you made on March 23, 2010, regarding early learning that I had the privilege of speaking to at that time.

There's one other issue that I do want to address and that is the issue of whether or not resources were being used inappropriately. In particular, the member for Simcoe-Grey raises the issue of paid staff for ministers' offices being asked to assist in the distribution of these documents. The member for Simcoe-Grey included—and I will not show it—in his submission a picture of someone he considered to be a staffer or thought was a staff person from a minister's office. In fact, we have been able to identify this person as a staff member from Minister Takhar's office. I understand the picture was taken at 4:15 p.m.; we have been able to determine that. In fact, this staff person goes to work at 7:30. She had put in her full day and was on her own time when she was seen distributing this document. There's nothing that says that people who work in this place can't volunteer their time after hours. In fact, everyone who was out assisting the Liberal Party that day was a volunteer. There is no ruling by the Speaker that says that cannot happen.

This is clearly not an issue of contempt. This is clearly not a violation of any privilege of this House. Unlike the Magna budget, which was clearly an issue of contempt, this is not.

I would just again draw your attention to the facts that are very obvious when looking at this document, where the Liberal Party and Dalton McGuinty's government speak of "wanting to," "of proposing," of wanting to provide and having a plan. Unlike the members opposite, we do have a plan. The party has a right to promote that plan and in no way has this document in any way violated any rules or standing orders of this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Simcoe-Grey and the government House leader for their comments regarding the point of privilege. I'm going to take an opportunity to reserve my decision on this, to review the documents that have been provided and also to consult with the table and necessary sources.

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

The House recessed from 1201 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to rise today to recognize Friday, December 3, as International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It is a day to recognize how far we have come, but also how much further we need to go. All of the institutions housing Ontarians with an intellectual disability have now been closed, and individuals

now live in inclusive, supported residences within our communities. However, we still allow striking workers to picket those supported-living residences during times of labour unrest. This does not support the concept of respect and dignity individuals deserve.

When the Liberal government released their budget in March, it was revealed that they were backtracking on their commitment to provide a yearly 2% base funding increase for Community Living agencies. This broken promise greatly affects the more than 12,000 Ontarians with an intellectual disability currently sitting on a waiting list for residential supports. In Toronto alone, approximately 4,000 families are on the wait-list for special services at home, and what is most troubling is, no new applications have been approved since 2008. Yet this Liberal government continues to make funding announcement after funding announcement, prioritizing scholarships for foreign students instead of fixing the issues that are present today.

Some 15% of all Ontarians live or will live with a disability, and this number is rising as our population ages.

As we take a moment to recognize tomorrow as International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we must acknowledge our legislative responsibility to assist our friends and neighbours who live every day with a disability.

STEPHEN PETRUCCELLI

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have the distinct pleasure to recognize a wonderful and special constituent of mine: Mr. Stephen Petrucelli.

On November 27, I had the pleasure of participating in the 11th annual Give a Toonie, Share a Dream campaign that happens every year in November across all Staples Business Depot locations in support of the Special Olympics. Stephen was selected as the Special Olympics athlete to represent York region at the provincial winter Olympic games.

Stephen is a 30-year-old athlete with Down's syndrome. He has competed in various Special Olympics for the last 15 years, including the Special Olympics winter national games in Prince Edward Island in 2004, where he won one gold and two silver medals.

Stephen is also a very active constituent in my riding. He is a volunteer at York Central Hospital and at a dentist's office in Richmond Hill as a sterilization engineer.

The next provincial winter Special Olympics take place in Thunder Bay, and Stephen will be there once again proudly representing Richmond Hill.

Stephen's tremendous spirit is not only an inspirational story, it's also a true mark of the power of the human mind and body. I wish him the best of luck in his future endeavours. We are behind you, Stephen. Go, Stephen, go.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: As the member of provincial Parliament for Kitchener–Waterloo, I have the privilege

of representing the students at Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo, who are part of OUSA. I would like to today, on their behalf, ask the Liberal government to live up to a promise that it made in 2007 to our post-secondary students.

In its 2007 platform, the Liberal Party made a promise to students and families that they would convert post-secondary education tax credits to upfront grants, but the government has not yet fulfilled this important commitment. The government spent \$330 million last year on these tax credits, amounting to the single greatest expenditure on non-repayable student financial assistance. However, these credits do little to help families gain access to post-secondary education. You see, the credits come late in the year and they do not help the students with the upfront, expensive costs of tuition, books and living expenses. Additionally, most students do not earn enough income to make full use of the tax credits, leaving them with significant financial need. Families across Ontario are hurting everywhere, so it is important to ensure that they can all access post-secondary education.

On behalf of all of the students that I represent and OUSA, I ask this Liberal government to fulfill its promise to the students and move the tax credits to upfront grants so that students receive the money when they need it.

EDGEWOOD VILLA

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about a new development in Beaches–East York: It's called Edgewood Villa. It is a place that has been built for 29 or 30 hard-to-house people, and it is set up in the east end of Toronto. It was a remarkable place to visit. I went to their official opening earlier this week. This house was built with the assistance of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. and the city of Toronto.

As I said, there are 30 people who have homes there today who didn't have them before. Many of them are psychiatric survivors. Many of them are people who were homeless before.

It was an extreme pleasure to go into a building which in 2009 was derelict and see the remarkable work that was done by two very capable men, Ken McGowen and Bill Munro, and Habitat Services. They gutted the building and fixed it up. There are individual rooms and individual washrooms for each and every individual. The whole building has been transformed with a renovated kitchen, a dining room, an outdoor facility, a lounge, and an exercise room. It is truly what I think we need to do more of in this city.

So I congratulate them on the opening and look forward to welcoming them as the newest neighbours to Beaches–East York.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Charles Sousa: On behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I rise to recognize the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The annual observance

of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities occurs every December 3. It was enshrined by the United Nations with an aim to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

Ontarians with disabilities play many important roles in our society. Our social, economic, arts and culture, political and academic communities are all richer for their participation. That's why our government continues its important work to create an accessible Ontario by 2025, where everyone has the same opportunities to live, work and play.

We're also fortunate to be served by many outstanding local organizations that facilitate and promote greater support and understanding of persons with disabilities.

I want to recognize the extraordinary work done by the volunteers at the Luso Canadian Charitable Society. Their members include businesses, trade associations and unions who, together, have reached out to the community and raised funds to build a brand new support centre for people with disabilities in Toronto. They're now expanding their efforts to the Hamilton region. Their work is making a real difference for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities.

In Mississauga, ErinoakKids does a tremendous job, providing necessary treatment and support services to children with physical, developmental and communication challenges. With our government's support, they're continually working to reduce wait times as the need for more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Member from Leeds–Grenville.

SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today regarding a situation facing a number of residents in my riding whose water quality has been affected by the construction of a 168,000-panel solar farm. They are forced to drink bottled water due to work on this project, which saw more than 14,000 holes being drilled into the bedrock. The once crystal clear water in their taps is now a murky mess. It's no surprise that they're upset and worried.

It's sad to see, yet again, how this government's mismanagement of the green energy file has hurt people. Premier McGuinty's costly energy experiments have caused hydro bills to soar, and the Green Energy Act is affecting people's quality of life.

The lack of municipal and public control over these projects has led the township of Rideau Lakes to propose three amendments to the act to give municipalities and the public more say. I urge the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Energy and the Premier to consider the township's three recommendations: (1) to establish minimum setbacks for major solar farms similar to those for wind farms; (2) to force solar developers to ensure adequate landscaping to create visual buffers; and (3) to require developers to study the possible impacts on groundwater, including baseline water quality testing before construction.

ARZ BAKERY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: In this difficult economic time, it's important to recognize small business owners because of the contributions they make to the local economy. They employ many people and give them the ability to practise their talents—and besides that, the many spinoff jobs they create.

One business I would like to commend is Arz Bakery, a bakery and grocery store that has served Ontarians for over two decades. Arz Bakery draws customers from across the GTA and is not limited to loyal customers; because of their quality of service and an incredible variety of international foods, they are always drawing in new customers. To date, they have satisfied over 10 million of them, and just as important, they currently employ over 100 people with many spin-off jobs.

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The president of the company, Armand Boyadjian, is currently working hard with his brothers, Jack and Hovic, and their team to make their business a success story for everyone in the Scarborough area. It has become a landmark in the community, hosting some of the best baklava and cakes you find in the GTA. They have made an incredible name for themselves by employing talented chefs that have customers coming back to them again and again, every single day.

Besides that, they also contribute to the local economy and to group and charitable organizations, to soccer teams, to hockey teams, to the community centre and to charitable organizations because they believe strongly in their community, and they believe their responsibility is to support them back on a regular basis.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: As the Legislature progresses towards the winter recess, our thoughts become increasingly focused on the Christmas season. Christmas parades, concerts, church services, children's parties, family gatherings, bazaars and volunteer celebrations bring joy across Algoma–Manitoulin.

In Manitouwadge, Hawk Junction, Silver Water, Dubreuilville and Webbwood, families gather to celebrate the holiday season. In Elliot Lake, Hornepayne, Nairn Centre, Sheguiandah, Killarney and Wikwemikong, people delight in renewed friendships and the Christmas season. Folks in Chapleau and White River enjoy the experience of the Canadian Pacific's holiday train as it stops in their communities on its way across Canada. People in Spanish, Richards Landing, Central Manitoulin, Wawa and Aundeck Omni Kaning join the holiday season with homes festooned with lights, stars and wreaths. Christmas parties are enjoyed in Massey, Hilton Beach, Pic Mobert, Assiginack, Iron Bridge, and Gore Bay, and the people of Blind River, Espanola, M'Chigeeng, Algoma Mills, Desbarats and Whitefish River enjoy the festivities, too.

It is a time of the year when the always-generous people of Algoma–Manitoulin make a special effort to

see that those less fortunate can celebrate the holiday season also. I commend the service clubs, church groups, schools, companies and neighbours who make the Christmas season Christmas.

As we all look forward to a happy and prosperous 2011, let me wish you a merry Christmas and a very happy new year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You forgot my good friends in Providence Bay.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: They're in Central Manitoulin, Speaker. You should know that.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise to thank the Wine Council of Ontario for coming to Queen's Park today. Today, members of this Legislature were challenged to get more VQA products on the wine lists of restaurants in their riding.

The Wine Council of Ontario can certainly count on my support and, I'm sure, on that of all of my colleagues. Our government believes in locally grown wine and food because we know it supports our farmers our environment and our economy.

We have four great wine regions in the province: the Niagara Peninsula, Pelee Island, Lake Erie North Shore and Prince Edward County. They are home to more than 400 vineyards and upwards of 15,000 acres of grapes.

Our government has renewed its successful VQA wine support program with an investment of \$30 million, and beginning in 2011, we will also provide \$3 million per year for four years to help grape growers transition to a long-term focus on VQA wines. These investments are part of our broader long-term plan for Ontario's wine and grape industry.

By working together, we can bring attention to the fact that good things grow in Ontario and that Ontarians should look for VQA wines whenever they make a purchase, whether in a store or in a restaurant, in all of our ridings.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REPEAL OF THE HIDDEN ENERGY TAXES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 ÉLIMINANT LES TAXES CACHÉES IMPOSÉES EN MATIÈRE D'ÉNERGIE

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 144, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: The bill repeals section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, which allows the board to collect money from consumers in their service areas, gas distributors, licensed distributors, the Independent Electricity System Operator and any other person prescribed by the regulations made under the act. The act requires that all money collected be paid to Ontario for certain purposes as set out in the act.

The bill does not affect the use of money payable under section 26.1 of the act before its repeal.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (DAMAGE DEPOSITS), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (DÉPÔTS POUR DOMMAGES)

Mrs. Savoline moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 145, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation.

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.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: This bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act by giving landlords the option of collecting a damage deposit of no more than 25% of one month's rent from the tenants. The purpose of a damage deposit is to partially compensate landlords for the cost of repair or replacement of property that was wilfully or negligently damaged by a tenant and/or a specified person. The landlord and tenant must agree in writing as to the condition of the rental unit on the day the tenancy begins, and the damage deposit cannot be used to compensate ordinary wear and tear.

Damage deposits help to protect all tenants. In a case where a unit is damaged and a damage deposit is in place, the onus for at least some of the cost of the repair is on the current tenant and not an expense that would be borne by all the existing tenants in the building. In addition, damage deposits provide an incentive to tenants to ensure that housing units are in good condition for future renters, thereby also helping to protect the quality of rental housing in Ontario.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I seek unanimous consent that any recorded votes arising from consideration of private members' public business today be deferred to deferred votes on Monday, December 6, 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.
Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Paul Miller: “Save the Special Diet and Raise the Rates

“Whereas Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario disability support program (ODSP) do not provide enough money to meet basic needs; e.g., a single recipient receives only \$585 per month;

“Whereas single recipients in 1993 received over \$600 per month and inflation since then is estimated to be 35% to 40%;

“Whereas the special diet program provided one way people on OW and ODSP could acquire money to meet basic needs, especially the need for healthy food;

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

“Save the special diet program and raise the rates to bring social assistance rates back to the 1995 levels before the 21.6% cut, adjusted for inflation.”

I agree with this and will affix my signature.

1320

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Geoff Fromow of Tecumseth Pines Home Owners’ Association for sending this petition to me.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

“Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians,” including the people of Tottenham.

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

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

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

“Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

“Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

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

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

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

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions to do with paved shoulders on Ontario highways. It reads:

“Petition in Support of Bill 100 (Paved Shoulders on Provincial Highways)

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

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

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

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

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

Of course I support this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Lynda McNicol, who picked up these petitions from the Stayner and Collingwood libraries, and also Blue Mountain Manor retirement services in Collingwood for sending these petitions to me. The petition is to save the medical laboratory services in Stayner.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

“Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller

hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians.”

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

HOME CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition that has been given to me by Mr. William Diaz, who is very interested in ensuring that people who will look after sick people and those with disabilities get taken care of. It reads as follows:

“To the Parliament of Ontario and the minister responsible for seniors:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Since I enthusiastically agree with this petition I’m happy to sign it and send it to you through page Elizabeth.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

“Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

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

“That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore

its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis.”

I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with page Donna.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have here a petition from the good people of Wellington, Ontario, in Picton county. It reads as follows:

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

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I am in agreement and will sign my name thereto and send it with page Sarah.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: This petition is also about medical laboratory services, but this time to restore medical laboratory services in Elmvale.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

“Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians,” including the people of Elmvale.

Of course I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition again, this time from the good people of Windsor. It reads as follows:

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

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I am in agreement with this as well and would sign it and send it down with page Tony.

**ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA:

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition this time from the good people of Sudbury, Val Caron and Hanmer. It reads as follows:

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

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I’m in agreement, will sign my name thereto and send it down with page Donna.

1330

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I’ve received this petition from Consumer Federation Canada and Mr. Barnabic, the president of the federation.

“To the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services:

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

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature ... be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

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

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

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

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

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign this petition and send it to you with page Breana.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Petition in Support of Bill 100 (Paved Shoulders on Provincial Highways)

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I’d ask for the consent of the House to wear the purple ribbon in recognition of the Hawkins family, who perished two years ago from carbon monoxide poisoning.

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

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON
MONOXIDE DETECTORS), 2010**

**LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2010
(DÉTECTEURS DE MONOXYDE
DE CARBONE)**

Mr. Hardeman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in all residential buildings / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment pour exiger l'installation de détecteurs de monoxyde de carbone dans tous les bâtiments servant à l'habitation.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 69, the Hawkins Gignac Act. This bill would save lives and prevent tragedies by requiring working carbon monoxide detectors in all Ontario homes.

I want to recognize John Gignac, who is here today to support the bill and who has been tireless in his efforts to raise awareness about the need for carbon monoxide detectors. John has personal experience with the tragedy of carbon monoxide poisoning. About two years ago, his niece, Laurie Hawkins, and her young family were poisoned by carbon monoxide after the exhaust on their gas fireplace was blocked and filled their home with the poisonous gas.

Richard and Laurie Hawkins, previously Laurie Gignac, were from North Bay, but after they moved to southwestern Ontario, they made Woodstock in Oxford county their home, and were an important part of our community. I'm honoured that their families allowed me to name the bill in their memory.

Richard Hawkins was a talented hockey player who played in the OHL and later shared his love of hockey with others by coaching the local team. His young son Jordan shared that passion for hockey and was already demonstrating a sense of responsibility as a paper boy. Fourteen-year-old Cassandra was in grade 9 at St. Mary's High School and was part of the social justice club.

As an OPP community relations officer, Constable Laurie Hawkins touched the lives of many people throughout Oxford, especially the students she visited. She shared stories about her family to help give them self-confidence and the knowledge they needed to make good decisions. It's tragic that someone who spent her life helping others and teaching them about safety was lost in a preventable tragedy.

Although carbon monoxide leaks occur, we can take steps to save lives. Just last week in Sault Ste. Marie, there was another incident. A gas fireplace wasn't vent-

ing properly, and the carbon monoxide was coming back into the home. But this time there was a difference. In 2009, Sault Ste. Marie passed a bylaw requiring homes to have carbon monoxide detectors. The alarm went off, and the fire department came and ventilated the house. Thankfully, due to the alarm, no one was hurt. Platoon Chief Joe May from Sault Ste. Marie Fire Services said afterwards, "CO alarms do save lives. They're just as important as smoke alarms."

Detectors are important because there are many sources of carbon monoxide in our homes: furnaces, water heaters, stoves and fireplaces to name just a few. It is produced any time fuel is burning. What makes it so dangerous is that carbon monoxide is tasteless, odourless and colourless. There is no way to detect it before it starts to make people sick. The only way to ensure that Ontario families are protected is to pass this bill and have a functioning carbon monoxide detector in every home.

This is not the first time we've debated the Hawkins Gignac Act in this Legislature. I first introduced this bill in December 2008, immediately following the tragedy. On April 2, 2009, it was debated and passed second reading unanimously. Unfortunately, when the government prorogued the Legislature last year, they chose not to carry it forward so we had to start the process again.

Over the last two years, members of both the Hawkins and Gignac families have been here to show their support for our bill. As well, firefighters, police officers, students who were taught safety by Laurie Hawkins and members of the community who were touched by the family have all come to the Legislature to demonstrate their support.

Today, I'm asking members to support this life-saving bill, and I'm asking the government to immediately hold committee hearings to ensure that it isn't lost again.

As technology improves and the cost of heating increases, people across Ontario are improving their homes, insulating and replacing windows and doors. As people make their homes more and more airtight, the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning increases.

Currently, carbon monoxide detectors are only required in homes built after August 2001 or in municipalities that have passed a bylaw, like North Bay and Niagara Falls. That leaves too many people at risk. This bill requires carbon monoxide detectors in all homes.

For new homes, detectors have to be hardwired and interconnected. Since this would be cost prohibitive in existing homes, they would require battery-operated or plug-in carbon monoxide detectors on each level. The bill is modelled on the regulations that make smoke detectors mandatory.

A number of coroner's juries have recommended legislation like this, which makes carbon monoxide detectors mandatory, in order to save lives. Eight years ago, a jury in Sudbury that investigated four deaths due to carbon monoxide poisoning made that recommendation. Just last year, Dr. Andrew McCallum, chief coroner of Ontario, made the same recommendation following an investigation into the death of an 84-year-old woman due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Between 2001 and 2007, 74 people died in Ontario due to carbon monoxide poisoning. In fact, it is the number one cause of accidental poisoning deaths in North America. Just last Sunday, a Calgary man ended up in the hospital and almost died after roofers accidentally covered his furnace vent with a tarp, forcing carbon monoxide into his home. Yet, too many people are still unaware of the dangers of carbon monoxide.

Last year, I met a woman from the VON who told me about a parrot her daughter had given her. They took it home and, very shortly afterward, the bird died. They never even considered that carbon monoxide could be the cause. Why would they? There was no sign at all that there was something wrong in their home. They assumed the parrot had been ill and replaced it. But shortly afterward, the second bird died as well. They quickly got a carbon monoxide detector and discovered that their furnace had been slowly filling their house with the poisonous gas.

This was almost another tragedy. It demonstrates once again the importance of having a detector in your home.

1340

I know that people across Ontario have accepted the need to have smoke detectors on every level of their home. I hope that we can make people aware of the need for the same with carbon monoxide alarms. Currently, many people believe that one detector in the home is enough. It is a good first step, but the reality is that you not only need them near the potential source, you need them near the sleeping areas. Low levels or early stages of carbon monoxide poisoning have flu-like symptoms: tiredness, headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting. The natural reaction for most people is to go to bed. You need an alarm that will wake you and your family up and warn you to get out safely. That's why this bill requires a detector on all floors.

I've been very pleased at the support this bill has received from municipal councils who have passed resolutions of support, as well as organizations across Ontario including the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, Co-operators and the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, to name only a few. Patrick Burke, the fire marshal of Ontario, said, "The fire service has always understood first-hand the importance of having early warnings and the tragedies related to carbon monoxide poisoning." Frank Lamie, deputy fire chief, Toronto Fire Services, said, "As you may know, the fire service is very much in favour of a requirement for carbon monoxide alarms. The tragedy in your riding is just one in a long line of needless deaths."

I recently received an email from Darrell Parker which read, "As fire chief of the town of Ingersoll, a friend and colleague of Constable Laurie Hawkins, I am writing to you to express my support of the Hawkins Gignac Act, 2010. The result of this tragedy still resonates within this community and within the emergency service providers that work so hard to keep our community safe. Much has been done in our local area to promote carbon monoxide

awareness and safety, and we are now looking forward to the passing of this bill."

As a former firefighter, I know that often they are the first to witness tragedy. I want to thank them for their work to protect and save lives. I also want to thank the firefighters' association for meeting with me and suggesting some good amendments to make the bill more effective. I hope that this bill will receive second reading today and that the government will schedule committee hearings as soon as they can to hear from groups like theirs.

The firefighters' association pointed out that this bill will help protect all of our emergency personnel by giving them more warning on what type of situation they are facing. Imagine that emergency personnel are told that there is a medical call. Someone is unconscious and it is assumed that it is a health issue, but in fact the house is full of carbon monoxide. Passing this bill and requiring a detector in all homes might not only save the homeowner, it could protect our emergency personnel.

But this bill is only one part of the effort to avoid future tragedies. The other half is education. We need to continue to raise awareness of the importance of having a detector and encouraging people not to wait for the legislation to pass, but to ensure they have working detectors in their home today. I want to commend John Gignac, who is working hard to get that message out through his foundation, the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education. I want to thank him for all his work on this bill.

Over the last two years, many people and companies have been working hard to raise awareness about the dangers of carbon monoxide. I want to thank all the members of the media who have helped share that message. I want to particularly commend some of the companies who have made donations to ensure that people who might have difficulty affording the detectors are protected, including First Alert Canada, which donated a number of carbon monoxide detectors to Operation Sharing in my riding. I also want to thank Canadian Tire and Kidde Canada, who have generously donated carbon monoxide detectors to help save lives, and recognize Kidde's commitment to education about the dangers of carbon monoxide. Last spring, Enbridge announced a donation of \$100,000 to provide smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to be distributed through fire services in communities across Ontario. It is great to see all these organizations working to raise awareness and save lives.

Since I introduced this bill, I have heard many tragic stories of lives that have been lost due to carbon monoxide poisoning. But I've also heard many other stories about lives that have been saved by detectors, like the bishop from Kingston who bought a detector and, one day later, had a carbon monoxide leak at his home and was alerted by the alarm going off. He hadn't even installed it yet; it was still sitting on his kitchen counter. With more detectors in Ontario homes, hopefully we will have more positive stories like this one in the future.

This bill will save lives. The sooner it becomes law, the more tragedies we can prevent. I ask all members to support the bill today and ask the government to put aside partisan issues and immediately move forward with committee hearings.

I ask everyone listening here and at home to ensure your family is protected with functioning carbon monoxide detectors today.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up and comment on Bill 69, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in all residential buildings, which was introduced by my colleague the member for Oxford.

There's no doubt about it: Our government values the safety of all Ontarians. The safety of Ontarians is very important to us as a government, as a community and as a society. We encourage all residents to install carbon monoxide detectors to protect themselves, and also to inspect those detectors to make sure they are functioning very well.

I know the member speaks passionately about this issue because one of his constituents, a couple of years back, died from carbon monoxide. As he mentioned in his speech, many people across the province of Ontario have died, and it's important for all of us to make sure that all residences, whether single family homes or buildings, are protected and supplied and equipped with those detectors in order to make sure all the people live in a safe environment.

I listened to him carefully, and do you know what? As a member on this side, as he asked all the people to debate this issue without any partisan background or reason, I would say to him I'm standing up in my place on this side of the House to say congratulations for introducing this bill. It's important to you and important to us to make sure all people live in safe places.

I know that many people have lost their lives. Many friends and families and people we know, on a regular basis across the province of Ontario, die as a result of not installing carbon monoxide detectors in their buildings.

As we know, according to the building code, if you build a new building or renovate a building, you have to install carbon monoxide detectors in all new residential areas and buildings. But the building code does not force old, existing buildings to install carbon monoxide detectors.

Some municipalities, I believe, have lately passed bylaws to force residential buildings to install those detectors because they think it's important to make sure their population is safe, but many others don't, because we don't have a building code in the province of Ontario that forces all existing buildings and new buildings to have carbon monoxide detectors in place.

Therefore, I think the member from Oxford brings to the House a very important issue to be debated. It's important for all of us to add our input, and I think it's more important for all of us, as elected officials, to send

it to committee and listen to many different stakeholders, as he mentioned: fire departments, cities, construction companies. I think it would be important to enrich and enhance this bill; to allow this bill to go to committee and listen to the stakeholders and add their voice to our voices; and to make sure that when we pass the law for all Ontarians everywhere in the province, all the stakeholders are satisfied with the new bill that would be implemented across the province of Ontario.

In the end, I want to tell the member from Oxford, congratulations. I am looking forward to seeing the bill go to committee, where we can listen to many different stakeholders and experts who will give us advice and the ability to implement a solid future bill that can serve us well in the province of Ontario.

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

1350

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm very happy to stand in support of my friend from Oxford's private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, on carbon monoxide detectors, Bill 69.

This is long overdue, and I think in contrast to some of the things that happen in this House, this is something we can all agree on. Carbon monoxide detectors, if they're good enough for new houses, have got to be good enough for all houses.

All you have to do is remember your high school chemistry: Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless gas. You can't see it, you can't smell it, and you don't know it's there. By the time you find out it's there, it's too late for you. It bonds to your red blood cells. It is what some people call the silent killer. We have to do something about this. I can tell you, in our household, we have had it there for many years.

These detectors are not like smoke detectors. Smoke detectors are great if you're asleep, because it's an audible alert. These you need 24 hours a day because you need an alert that tells you something exists that you have no way of knowing about unless you have some kind of warning.

This bill will, therefore, protect lives and prevent tragedies through requiring working carbon monoxide detectors in each and every home in the province of Ontario. Quite simply, the bill saves lives. It saves lives. Between 2001 and 2007, 74 people died in Ontario due to carbon monoxide poisoning. In fact, it is the number one cause of accidental poisoning deaths in North America. It seems like something that's somewhat arcane, but the member from Oxford keeps bringing this bill back because it makes sense. We've got to get this thing to committee. We've got to get it passed.

In fact, a British Columbia health organization estimated that each year 13,000 Canadians have some level of carbon monoxide poisoning.

I remember in my own home having the furnace looked at for its annual cleaning. I might use this as a commercial and say that everybody with an operating furnace of any type should have it looked at annually. I

was told: “You have this percentage of carbon monoxide coming out of this furnace, and when you get to”—some level, and my memory seems to recall 15% carbon monoxide—“you’ve really got to change this unit and get a new one.” We were getting close to that, so he was recommending very strongly that we put carbon monoxide detectors in the house. I informed him we had them for just that reason. It makes good sense.

To protect lives, every house with a fuel-burning appliance or attached garage should have a working carbon monoxide alarm on every floor. Today there are too many homes without one. Currently, only houses built after 2001 are required to have carbon monoxide detectors, and that means there are too many homes in Ontario where people are at risk. I can’t repeat this too many times: This is colourless, odourless, and there’s only one way to know that it’s there. That is to have a device, a carbon monoxide detector, that says, “It’s there; get yourself out of the house and start ventilating.”

Despite the fact that we have so many tragedies in Ontario, we still don’t have this act in law, and despite the fact that coroner’s juries have recommended legislation be changed to make carbon monoxide detectors mandatory. Firefighters and fire departments across Ontario continue to raise awareness about the need for carbon monoxide detectors in all homes. We need to support our firefighters’ efforts.

Every member in this House has an obligation to support this bill. The Hawkins Gignac Act is modeled on regulations which makes smoke detectors mandatory. Again, how can we not support this bill?

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It is my honour to stand today in support of this bill. I don’t think I have any hesitation in expecting that all members of this House will support this bill, as they did on the last occasion.

My friend from Oxford is tenacious. He stands here, again, to ask that we support this bill. I know that it is not the fault of the House or any individual in the House, but this bill was brought forward last year and died as a result of prorogation.

The member from Oxford is asking for a very simple thing. He’s asking that we recognize that carbon monoxide, in an industrial society like our own, is prevalent. It can get into anybody’s house through any heating apparatus or through any automobile. It is a silent killer, as has been said.

It is such an efficient killer that people don’t recognize or realize. It is absolutely efficient because it will combine with the haemoglobin in a person’s bloodstream with 100 times the efficiency that oxygen combines with haemoglobin and actually displaces the oxygen through normal breathing. It is a killer of some extreme rapidity. Almost every single victim never knows what is happening to them, never has an idea. They may feel tired. They have no idea that there’s anything wrong, and until the alarm goes off would probably be oblivious to the fact.

This is the second time my friend has had to bring this bill before the House. I am reminded, and I want to talk a minute, about all of the good work that is being done in this House around fire safety and safety issues. My friend is bringing forth this bill for the second time.

I see my friend from Scarborough–Pickering opposite, who has brought forward three or four times a bill for visual fire alarms for the deaf and hard of hearing so that they can have the option and the ability to have visual fire alarms to alert them, and I assume visible carbon monoxide alarms would go right along with that so that they would have the opportunity of seeing what they cannot hear. That bill is in its fourth iteration. It’s coming around again and again and it has not passed into law. It is absolutely sane. It is absolutely what is necessary for the safety of the people of this province.

I am reminded that the now Minister of Natural Resources has come before this House on at least three and possibly four occasions, trying to make mandatory sprinklers available in all new houses built in the province of Ontario. It has been debated three or four times in this House and has been passed unanimously and then nothing happened with it. It is an excellent bill that needs something to happen for it in terms of fire safety.

The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, my colleague who sits immediately behind me here, has brought forward a bill on two occasions for mandatory fire alarms and mandatory sprinklers in all seniors’ residences. That has been debated on two occasions and passed unanimously, and unfortunately nothing has happened with it.

I myself on two or three occasions now have brought forward a bill that would ban wooden fire escapes in the province of Ontario because it makes no sense that people who live in wooden buildings or buildings that are combustible and of an age that aren’t as fireproof as modern buildings should have as their only means of egress a fire escape made of wood, which itself would probably be on fire at the same time the building was on fire. That, too, has made it all the way through committee on two occasions and has been passed but never ordered for third reading.

I think what we need to do in combination, all members of this House, is to not only pass this bill here today, but take all of those bills, take all of those good ideas that come from the government side, from the opposition side, from individual members, which have all been approved unanimously on every occasion they’ve been brought forward and put them into an omnibus bill. I’m sure my friend from Oxford would have no objections if what he is saying and doing today was combined with the other safety measures that we all know are necessary.

People in this province are dying. People in this province do not have the safety which can be afforded to them. What is the roadblock? What is the roadblock for making life safer for ordinary Ontarians? I know when I have gone to committees on some of these bills, the roadblock sometimes is the building industry. I know that sometimes the roadblock is those people who own apart-

ment buildings and who don't want to put in safety devices like we're talking about here today, carbon monoxide detectors, because they cost \$30 or \$40 or \$50 to install and they just don't want to do it. But I think we, as parliamentarians, as legislators, have the right and the duty to do what is going to protect lives.

So I am asking the members, and particularly the members opposite me here today, pass this bill, yes, because that's all we get to vote on today. Pass this bill, but please, take this back to your caucus. Take it back in combination with the government members' own bills and ask the ministers, ask the Premier to do something. It's not enough to just debate this issue in the House this time for the second time. We need to pass it.

1400

As the member from Oxford stated, 72 people have died in the last number of years as a result of carbon monoxide. That number has expanded many fold over those who have lost their lives in fires, those who have lost their lives and have never had the opportunity to hear the alarms go off, those who could have been saved with sprinklers in their houses.

I think we need to do that, and I'm asking the members opposite, when we leave here today, when we vote unanimously for this bill, as I know we probably will, to go back to caucus and say, "We need to do some more. We need not just to stop here. We need to pass it." It can be passed alone. It can be passed in combination. It can have a government bill number on it, and I don't think any of us who have proposed these bills will take umbrage if the government seizes the idea and runs with it and does something for the people of Ontario. This is not cost-prohibitive for the treasury. This is not going to cost a lot of money to the people of this province. It is a very modicum of money that is going to be spent individually, or, if you are an apartment owner or a building owner, perhaps a little more, but it is easily totally recoverable through rent and other things. So I'm asking the members to do exactly that.

On the last occasion, my colleague from Parkdale-High Park talked about her own experience. I'd like to read this into the record because it's absolutely poignant how it affected one member of this Legislature who, as I think she put it, by the grace of God escaped, thanks to a carbon monoxide detector. On the last occasion, Ms. DiNovo stated the following, and I'd like to quote it into the record again:

"This is a personal issue for me too, because before I was a politician I was a United Church minister, and early on, coming to Toronto and accepting a charge, we moved into a rental house. It was the first house, I have to say, that had a carbon monoxide detector in it. I had never seen such a thing before. We really didn't know anything about carbon monoxide or the possibilities of carbon monoxide poisoning. Then one day it started beeping, and like some of the stories that I've read in doing research for this bill, we thought there was something wrong with the detector. We turned it off, and it kicked back in; it started beeping again. I thought, 'I

don't really know what this is about but maybe we should phone the fire department, just in case,' feeling a little embarrassed, actually, thinking that they'll come and it'll be nothing. It will just be a faulty detector. Certainly, we could smell nothing; we detected nothing in the house.

"This is so typical of what families go through and have gone through. The fire department was there, as usual, in minutes. Within minutes more, the entire street was cordoned off. That's how bad it was. It was a real wake-up call to us as a family. Had we not done that, had we not had the carbon monoxide detector operative and working in our house—who knows? My two children were in the house at the time, my husband, myself, our animals. We're just very glad that we had one, and it was unfortunately not due to our own awareness."

She went on to support Bill 143, as it was at that time, and I support it equally strongly today. I do know that in purchasing a recent summer property I made sure not only that it had carbon monoxide detectors—and we went out and bought three, one for each floor—but that it was also sprinklered, because if you're going to buy a newer home, that's what you need to do. The costs are not that great, and certainly the insurance costs go down as a result as well.

I would like to close by just reading a quote or two, if time permits, from some firefighters. First of all, Dave Thomson, past president of the Firefighters Association of Ontario, says, "Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer. With the introduction of the Hawkins Gignac Act, this will ensure that all homes in Ontario will have early detection on all levels of residences and that they are installed and maintained properly."

Frank Lamie, the deputy fire chief of Toronto Fire Services, stated the following: "During the early part of my career I attended several tragic situations involving carbon monoxide exposure. People would be found in their beds and it would be determined that the CO from a vehicle that had been left running in an attached garage had seeped into the house. As CO is odourless, tasteless, and colourless there was no warning that this silent killer was even a concern.

"I believe that tragedies like these are 100% avoidable. Many cities have passed by-laws that require CO detectors to be installed in all dwelling units where a fuel-fired appliance exists. I believe that if this was made law for the entire province of Ontario we would all but eliminate needless deaths due to carbon monoxide poisoning."

I ask the members present to vote for this bill and to do even more: Pass them all.

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

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'd like to open my remarks, first of all, by thanking John Gignac, who is here today and who is the head of the foundation for carbon monoxide education. I think, John, what you will see most likely is unanimous consent here, and you're going to go home fairly happy.

Second, we want to of course say thank you very much to the member from Oxford because he has taken this more than seriously. In fact, he wants to require that carbon monoxide detectors are installed in all residential buildings; not only new homes, but every home in Ontario. I'm happy that almost in the same sentence here he says that these carbon monoxide detectors must "conform to standards prescribed by the regulations made under the act." That's an important item because we know today what some people do in terms of fire detection and smoke alarm detectors.

We all know that a smoke detector is not a one-size-fits-all. There are many kinds of smoke detectors. For most tenants, I might say, these smoke detectors are too sensitive, especially for those who live in Toronto in these very small bachelor units or bachelorette buildings. That would mean that you have one smoke detector, and as soon as you turn on the water or begin to cook something, that smoke detector will cause an alarm.

Obviously, there are two or three options when the smoke detector is that sensitive. What people find—in the newspapers, it tells us certainly—is that either the tenant tapes it over with Scotch tape or some other tape, or removes the battery or switches the whole thing off. So in short, I think when you say that standards should be applied and prescribed, this is very important, because the engineering in this is a very important item.

I happen to think that it makes little sense to have a carbon monoxide detector operated only by a battery, because a battery runs out within a year or a year and a half, and then you have to start from the beginning again. The best-engineered item in terms of carbon monoxide detection would certainly be one that you plug in and one that's either battery operated along with being electrically operated—

Mr. Mike Colle: Hard-wired.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: —along with being hard-wired. The whole unit should be hardwired. That's a very important item, and I know that the member from Oxford certainly agrees with that.

One more item of caution, and that is, that as people in Ontario are listening to our debate here and the member from Oxford, they should also know that carbon monoxide is really produced by incomplete combustion of fuels. That could be propane, heating oil, kerosene, coal, charcoal, gasoline or wood. There are thousands of wood-burning stoves. When you take a piece of wood that is painted, as an example, or that has been ossified to some degree, and you stick it in a wood-burning place, then some gas will naturally escape. That gas will then be identified through the carbon monoxide detection. So that's a very important item as well. Anyone who burns wood should know that this is an important item. Even if you're in the country, even if you're on a farm, it is important that you plug in that carbon monoxide detector because it is, as the member says, going to save some lives.

Finally, we know that this kind of gas from incomplete combustion impairs their judgment.

To finish up my short comments here: As it is the number one cause of accidental poisoning death in North America, I think it behooves all of us to ensure that carbon monoxide detectors are inside all homes.

1410

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

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to begin by congratulating the member for Oxford for his continued and very determined commitment to ensuring that every household in the province of Ontario is protected from the threat of carbon monoxide poisoning.

I am a strong proponent of this bill. I know that in our own home, we do have carbon monoxide detectors on each level.

As you know, the residents of Oxford suffered a tragic loss due to carbon monoxide poisoning, and I know that this heartbreaking experience has had a profound impact on our colleague from Oxford. He saw a very vibrant, young family totally destroyed by carbon monoxide poisoning and, as a result, it has impacted him and it has impacted that community.

I want to thank the relatives of the Hawkins family who are here today, and to express my sympathy to you for your loss. I sincerely hope that what happened to the members of your family will at long last provide the impetus to this House to move forward and ensure that this bill is passed today and is passed for third reading, in order that we can ensure that everybody in this province is obligated to install carbon monoxide detectors to make sure that a tragedy such as the one that happened to the Hawkins family does not happen again.

This bill would amend the Building Code Act, 1992, to mandate detectors to be present in all residential buildings. As we've heard today, only homes that were built after 2001 must be equipped with a detector, so we have many homes that are not protected today.

This is an important bill. We've heard as well that carbon monoxide is dangerous because it is odourless, tasteless and colourless. It is a silent killer. We can be surrounded by it in our homes and have no idea whatsoever of the danger we are in, and we've heard examples of that.

So today we have an opportunity to take the steps that are necessary to prevent tragedies such as the one that happened in Oxford. We have an opportunity to pass legislation that would require the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in the homes of people in this province. It is a simple, inexpensive and practical way to protect ourselves and our loved ones. We also have to remember that we must make sure that our furnaces and ventilation pipes are inspected at least once a year to determine that they are functioning properly. These are a few of the measures we can take to make sure that our households are safe.

It is always regrettable and it is very sad when tragedies such as what happened to the Hawkins family occur. However, when this bill passes, and I have no doubt that it will, we will at least have been able to use the example

positively, to make change for the better in the province of Ontario. For that, the Hawkins and Gignac families should be very proud.

I again applaud the member for Oxford for his dedication and commitment to making sure other families and communities are not afflicted with the grief which that community has suffered.

I want to thank the family members who are here today and who are working so hard to make sure that this legislation is passed and that this tragedy does not happen to another family.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: Let me make a couple of quick points first, before I get into the bulk of my comments. I could speak for about 20 minutes on this topic, maybe an hour, but I only have a few minutes.

First, let me thank the member from Oxford. He has my commitment to support the bill, as he did before. Obviously this is an issue that does go beyond partisan lines. I'm hoping that there is no tinge of partisanship here at all, and I reiterate his comment.

Second, and most importantly, let me one more time offer to the Gignac and Hawkins families my deepest sympathies, not just as friends but as close friends. John, Sandy and I and my brother are long-time friends. The Hawkins and Gignac families deserve our respect for doing a very powerful thing today.

What they're doing is turning something that could have made them go inward, and they've turned it to go outward. John himself is not a public man. He fought that through to become public enough to make a commitment and a promise, as he and his wife did, that on their deathbed, they asked them to do this—and that tells me about the power of the human spirit. To them and their entire family, a very large thank you and a large commitment to you for being such dedicated people to turn a tragedy into something that's important.

The two components are to get the CO detectors in homes and education. Very few people know that. We did a survey in Brantford and found out that only 20% of people were using carbon monoxide detectors, and they didn't know what their purpose was. It's an important aspect that's getting overlooked, and I hope we're not doing that.

John and Sandy co-chair an organization I founded back in 1998 called the Friends of the Firefighters. We're raising \$100,000 to put smoke detectors into homes in Brantford and area. A portion of that is being dedicated to the Canadian Hearing Society, which is a very special circumstance, so that they can have those detectors put into their homes as well. We're about three quarters of the way through the campaign, and I want to thank John and Sandy for co-chairing that. I've been helping with that, but for them to turn around and create the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation—in itself it became a national and soon-to-be international opportunity.

My own private member's Bill 34 complements what the member is doing. It's An Act to proclaim Carbon

Monoxide Awareness Week to enforce exactly what he's looking for, not just putting the CO detectors in homes, but educating people so that they naturally do it. The function of what we're doing here today is laudable, but most laudable is the fact that the family has turned this amazing tragedy into a positive and their dedication to do that. They've been able to draw international companies and corporations to join them in their quest to do that. It bodes well for them on the private sector side that they've come on-side and understand that this isn't about selling those implements, because quite frankly, in a very large portion of the cases right now, they're actually giving them away.

I want to laud the member from Oxford again, I want to thank the House for being as non-partisan as this place can possibly get, and I also thank one more time the family for participating locally in the Friends of the Firefighters campaign to raise that \$100,000 to put towards those CO detectors for those people who can't quite afford to get them.

By the way, CO detectors only last about seven years. I would ask us all, on top of that, to make sure you replace these things, because they only last seven years.

Thank you very much, and I laud the member from Oxford one more time

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak in support of this important piece of legislation, Bill 69, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in all residential buildings. I, too, applaud the member for Oxford for his foresight in drafting this bill.

Previous legislators who sat exactly where we sit today had the wherewithal and good judgement to enact legislation that serves to protect Ontarians from fatal threats in our homes and businesses. Those members were committed to fire alarms in all homes and carbon monoxide detection in new homes and buildings. Those members at that time saw that by enacting a simple piece of legislation they could save lives of countless numbers of individuals and families from undue tragedy and grief that had befallen far too many before.

I was fortunate enough in my former employment to work for a very forward-thinking company. Every year, when they made safety presentations, among the items they gave those employees—myself included—were carbon monoxide detectors. Those were some of the first carbon monoxide detectors that I had seen in our part of the country, so I know there are a number of homes—and I'm going to take the member from Brant's suggestion and double-check the date on mine and see how long they've been there, because something that a lot of people probably don't know is that there is a life cycle to those.

I won't go into a lot of details. A number of speakers have talked about carbon monoxide gas, that it's created from burning any kind of carbon fuel. Also, carbon monoxide is often called the silent killer because it gives

no clear warnings to its victims. It's an invisible gas with no taste or smell. Without carbon monoxide alarms, families are unable to detect the presence of this poisonous gas in any concentration. It is an ever-present threat and has needlessly inflicted pain and suffering on many of our families and all of our communities.

1420

I'd like to touch on several troubling statistics that I found while researching in regard to this. It's the number one of cause of accidental poisoning deaths in North America. Close to 15% of the incidents investigated by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority involve carbon monoxide. A British Columbia health organization, as one of the other members said, estimated that each year some 13,000 Canadians experience some level of carbon monoxide poisoning. In Ontario, close to 150 people are seen in emergency departments for carbon monoxide poisoning each month, thereby causing an undue load that could be prevented in our emergency departments and causing costs to our health system that could be prevented. In Ontario in 2007-08 there were almost 1,800 emergency department visits and 102 hospitalizations—and, thereby, expensive treatments—for carbon monoxide poisoning.

By enacting this simple piece of legislation, Bill 69, we will be doing our part to prevent any other families from experiencing the tragedy that befell the Hawkins Gignac family in late 2008. Richard, Laurie, Cassandra and Jordan were all overcome by carbon monoxide because a seemingly benign exhaust vent on a gas fireplace had become blocked simply from years of use. Like other Canadians who heat their home for comfort and survival, this family had no expectation that simply using a heating system could cause that. It's not fair or reasonable to expect that such a simple act could have such a profound consequence. The family did not own a carbon monoxide detector, and this led to their unfortunate demise.

Installing a minimum of one of these carbon monoxide alarms in each home, outside the primary sleeping area, is a key step to protecting lives and making homes safer. It ought to go hand in hand with the need for regular inspection.

I therefore urge all members to support this legislation. I commend the member from Oxford again and look forward to voting on this and the possible implementation of this bill in the near future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Oxford has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Thornhill, Beaches–East York, Davenport, Kitchener–Waterloo, Brant, and Sarnia–Lambton for their kind comments and support.

As I was listening to the presentations, it came to mind, obviously, that the driver for introducing this bill was the tragedy that happened in Woodstock to the Hawkins family, but what was interesting, from the perspective of us legislators, is that if that house had been built a few years later, it would have had carbon monoxide detectors installed because the law said they had to.

This whole bill is about awareness, to make sure that all people in Ontario have the same protection when it comes to detecting carbon monoxide in their homes. Just because a house was built before 2001 doesn't mean that under the law they shouldn't have exactly the same protections as anyone else.

I've heard comments from people saying, "Why should the government have to tell us we have to do this?" I want to say that unless there's awareness of the risk of the silent killer, when the people realize themselves that they need it, it's too late. Once they recognize that that's the reason they aren't feeling well, chances are they're never going to feel any better than at that moment, because that very well could be the end, because they do not know what is happening to them. It's so important that we bring awareness. I would like to see this bill pass, but the main reason I bring it back—and if, for whatever reason, it doesn't pass, we would continue doing the same thing, to create awareness to make sure that people realize they should have them for their own protection.

I don't believe there are many people, if any, who wouldn't think that the price of a carbon monoxide detector would be worth it if it saves their families' lives. I'm sure the Hawkins family would pay any price to put one in their home so that tragedy would never have happened.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We will vote on it in about 100 minutes.

JAMAICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should proclaim August 6 of each year Jamaican Independence Day throughout the province of Ontario, so that the outstanding achievements and contributions made by Ontarians of Jamaican heritage can be celebrated and recognized.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Balkissoon moves private member's notice of motion number 57. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It is a privilege and an honour for me to rise today and address the House. I'm extremely pleased to bring forth my resolution to proclaim August 6 of each year Jamaican Independence Day in the province of Ontario so that the outstanding achievements and contributions made by Ontarians of Jamaican heritage can be celebrated and recognized.

Before I begin, I would like to take a minute to introduce some of our guests who are here because they have an interest in this particular motion. From the consulate of Jamaica we have Mr. George Ramocan; we have Carolyn Goulbourne Warren from the Jamaican Information Service; Hyacinth Sulph-Curling—many of us know Mr. Curling—the better half; and Ida Fogo. I understand that there will be others that are joining us

later, and hopefully I'll give it my best to recognize them as they come in.

Let me start with a brief history about Jamaica. Jamaica was once ruled by the Spanish and it was known as Santiago. In 1655, it became a British colony known as it is today, Jamaica. In the 1930s, Jamaica was heading towards another crisis due to local discontent with political changes, worldwide economic depression, falling sugar prices, unemployment and a rising population. Things finally came to a head in 1938 with widespread violence and rioting. As a result of these disturbances, the first labour unions and the two major political parties were formed in the country. Sir Alexander Bustamante, founder and leader of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union, led the Jamaica Labour Party. Norman Manley, founder and leader of the National Workers Union, led the People's National Party. Both Bustamante and Manley were instrumental in Jamaica's move towards self-government.

In April 1962, Alexander Bustamante became the first Prime Minister of Jamaica. On August 6, 1962, Jamaica achieved full independence from Great Britain and became a member of the British Commonwealth.

A little history about Jamaicans coming to Canada: A group of 556 Jamaicans arrived in Canada in 1796 after an unsuccessful British attempt to enslave them in Jamaica. Between 1800 and 1920, a small number of Jamaicans immigrated as labourers to Nova Scotia. But from 1920 until the early 1960s, immigration was virtually non-existent.

In the 1900s, the Jamaicans who migrated to Canada included John Robert Giscome, a gold prospector; James Barnswell, a carpenter; and Robert Sutherland, who graduated from Queen's University and became the first black lawyer in Canada.

In the early 20th century, Jamaicans came to Canada to work as domestics, Canadian railway porters and blacksmiths. Due to Canada's restrictive immigration policies, it wasn't until the domestic program was implemented in 1955 that there was an increase in Jamaican immigration to Canada. Up until 1965, only about 1,000 Jamaican women had come to Canada under the domestic status program.

Due to a severe shortage of nurses in the late 1960s, Jamaican nurses were able to come to Canada under the cases-of-special-merit provisions of the immigration act.

In 1967, immigration laws were modified, and under the points system, more Jamaicans were able to come to Canada based on their level of education and skill.

As you can see, Jamaicans have been contributing to our country since the late 1700s. Many have made great contributions, but because of time, I would like to take a little moment to mention a few prominent Jamaicans whom most of us are familiar with. Before I begin, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Honourable Margaret Best, the Minister of Health Promotion, a Jamaican herself, who is very passionate about this resolution and will be speaking to you in a few minutes.

1430

We all remember the Honourable Lincoln Alexander. He was born in 1922 in Toronto to Jamaican parents. In 1985, he was appointed Ontario's 24th Lieutenant Governor, the first member of a visible minority to serve as the Queen's representative in Canada, a post he held admirably.

During his term in office, youth and education were hallmarks of his mandate. He served during the Second World War. He was the first black person to become a member of Parliament, in 1968, and served in the House of Commons until 1980. He was the federal Minister of Labour from 1979 to 1980.

We also have the Honourable Alvin Curling, former MPP for Scarborough-Rouge River and Speaker of this House from 2003 to 2005.

As a city councillor, I had the opportunity of serving with Mr. Curling, representing the same residents of Scarborough-Rouge River. As you know, after Mr. Curling retired from this Legislature, I became his successor.

He was first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1985, and had a distinguished 20-year career representing Scarborough-Rouge River. During this time, he was Minister of Housing, Minister of Skills Development and deputy House leader, and then became Speaker of the House.

We also had the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers, former Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and Minister of Children and Youth Services, and also a former vice-president of Scotiabank Canada. She was involved on a number of task forces concerning the role of women in the workplace.

A member of the board of governors of the University of Toronto and vice-chair of the governing council, she helped to author a university policy that no student would be prevented from studying in Toronto due to inadequate financial resources.

In 2003, she was awarded the Prime Minister's medal of appreciation for service to Jamaica by Jamaican Prime Minister Percival James Patterson in recognition of her work within Toronto's Jamaican community.

On a personal note, I have known and served with the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers in this Legislature. I have a great deal of respect for her and her incredible accomplishments as Minister of Children and Youth Services. We continue to be friends today.

According to the 2006 census, there are approximately 231,000 Jamaicans in Canada, with 85% living in Ontario. Of those, 160,000 or so live in Toronto. The Consul General of Jamaica estimates that there may be 300,000 Jamaicans, including those of Jamaican descent, living in our great city of Toronto.

A stroll through one of our communities would provide a glimpse of the traditions and cultures that we have come to appreciate. Jerk chicken, ackee and salt fish are some of the traditional dishes Jamaicans have introduced to us. And who can resist the great reggae music that is known around the world? Bob Marley's One Love is one of my favourite songs.

Let's show Jamaicans our appreciation by officially recognizing the contributions that Jamaicans have made to Ontario by celebrating Jamaican Independence Day every August 6.

Maybe I should mention some of the other people from the community in Toronto who were going to be here. I'm not sure if they're here, because I can't see all the way to the back.

We were supposed to have Mr. Nemeah Bailey, past president of the Jamaican Canadian Association; Pauline Christian, president of the Black Business Professionals Association; Sharon Ffolkes-Abrahams, president of the Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation; Mr. Michael Foster, CEO, Jamaican Canadian Association; Cikiah Thomas, an educator; and Stanley Grizzle, a World War II veteran.

I also understand that Gloria Richards, from the Speaker's office, who has been there, as many of us know, for quite a long time, is also watching with a lot of her friends.

I want to thank all of them for being here.

I want to thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to bring this resolution, and hopefully I will have your full support.

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

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise in support of the motion from the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, which would recognize Jamaican Independence Day in Ontario every August 6.

We know, of course, that Jamaica has been a great friend to Canada and Ontario since the Caribbean nation won its independence from the United Kingdom on August 6, 1962. It's also been, as the member has talked about, the birthplace of many great people who immigrated to Canada to make this country and this province of Ontario a better place with their brave decision. Currently, as was stated earlier, of the 231,000 people of Jamaican descent living in Canada, about 181,000 are residents here in our province of Ontario, and I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome all of our visitors here in the Legislative Assembly today.

Generations of Jamaican immigrants have left a lasting legacy on this province in a variety of areas, including arts, culture, business, sports and politics, and I know I look forward to hearing the Minister of Health Promotion make a few comments here as well today. Official recognition by Ontario of Jamaican Independence Day is a way to formally celebrate and honour these contributions by people. I appreciate the member for Scarborough-Rouge River mentioning Lincoln Alexander, our former Lieutenant Governor. His mother came to Canada from Jamaica.

Like every other ethnic group that has come to Ontario from around the world, I could list dozens of Jamaicans who have become household names by virtue of their remarkable accomplishments, which have made all of us feel very proud. But I'd like to talk today about one of

those unsung heroes, a man who, like so many immigrants to this province, makes quiet contributions that have helped build his community. Those efforts make places like Brockville and Leeds-Grenville not only better places for newcomers like himself, but for everyone who lives there.

You won't find the name of Reg Francis in the headlines back in Leeds-Grenville too often, but that doesn't mean that he hasn't made a lasting impression since arriving in Brockville in 1963. He didn't actually come to Canada straight from Jamaica; he had a short stay in England before realizing this country offered him more opportunity. His wife, Beryl, joined him a year later and together they raised six children in the city of Brockville. Vivianne, Yvonne, Lorraine and Warren now live here in the city of Toronto; Winston and Colin reside in Brockville. I'm very proud that when Winston was a young lad—and I was young too; I had a long curly Afro back then—I actually coached Colin in soccer. He was a great kid and I really enjoyed his company on the sidelines. He made me laugh a lot.

Mr. Mike Colle: What happened to your Afro?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I can't see you in an Afro.

Mr. Steve Clark: I had a big Afro; yes, literally. It was quite long. My kids say it's nasty now when they see a picture of it.

Reg operates a well-known welding shop with his son Colin, and in the past they've had up to eight employees working for them. Reg Francis didn't come to Canada looking for a job; he came here and created work for other Canadians.

Perhaps his greatest legacy, though, is his involvement in the Brockville and district multicultural festival. Many people are surprised to learn that Brockville has been a host to a multicultural festival that will celebrate its 30th anniversary next May. Reg Francis was at the table back in 1981 when the idea first was born, and he's been a central part of the organization ever since. It's one of the highlights in my riding, where up to 5,000 people come to sample food, purchase crafts and watch the entertainment provided by dozens of ethnic groups. It's a true melting-pot experience where we celebrate so much diversity coming together under the Canadian flag.

I know I always make sure that I attend the Caribbean booth, and I must say, I always enjoy a little libation and I always have a couple of patties. But every time I go there, one thing remains the same: that's the entire Francis family working at that booth, because every year, the family comes together to celebrate their roots, to work in that booth, and they'll never forget their commitment to both Jamaica and now their home country of Canada.

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Reg Francis was also a founder of the Brockville Lions steel band, which is a popular feature in parades all over eastern Ontario. By taking something from his culture, Reg Francis has helped hundreds of Brockville and area children gain some understanding of Caribbean culture and develop some musical talent. There's no

question that Reg is a proud Canadian, a proud Ontarian, but I'm sure that there's a stirring pride in Reg every August when he sees that black, green and gold Jamaican flag flying on Brockville's waterfront in honour of his homeland's independence day.

Flying the flag of other nations to celebrate their national days is a great tradition in the city of Brockville, one that I'm proud started when I was the mayor of that city many years ago. Every month—

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you. Every month, new flags are displayed on flagpoles over the city's historic railway tunnel, a sign to visitors that Brockville embraces people from all over the world.

I know Reg was delighted when he was told about the motion from the member for Scarborough—Rouge River. He was very pleased. I'm delighted to stand here, not just as an MPP but also to talk on behalf of the people in my riding, like Reg Francis, and to support this motion to recognize August 6 as Jamaican Independence Day.

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

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I certainly am pleased to rise in the Ontario Legislature today to speak on this motion. First of all, I want to take this opportunity to welcome all guests who are here today to the Ontario Legislature.

As an Ontarian of Jamaican birth, I am honoured to speak in support of this motion, which, if carried, would proclaim August 6 of each year Jamaican Independence Day in Ontario.

The passage of this motion would allow us to remember and recognize Jamaica's independence in the Ontario Legislature and to highlight the outstanding achievements and positive contributions of Jamaican Ontarians. I thank the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for bringing forward this motion, and I congratulate those who are working tirelessly to bring this to fruition.

Jamaica and Canada share a common heritage, both being members of the British Commonwealth. Since 1776, hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans have made Canada and this great province their home, and it certainly is a home away from home, the land of their birth, Jamaica—land of wood and water.

As of 2001, 3.5% of the city of Toronto's population and 3.2% of the population of the greater Toronto area was Jamaican born. While most Jamaican Ontarians live in Toronto and the greater Toronto area, many live and work across the province. Ontarians of Jamaican heritage have left an indelible mark on our society and are a vibrant and integral part of the wonderful mosaic that is Ontario.

Many Jamaican Ontarians and persons of Jamaican heritage have served Canada throughout its history and, in instances, they made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our freedoms and our ways of life. Many have left a great impression on our province, including Herb Carnegie, the first black hockey player to play in the NHL; Denham Jolly, president of Milestone Communications, a friend

and a pioneer of Canada's first urban radio station; Michael Lee-Chin, entrepreneur extraordinaire, whose gracious donations of \$30 million to the Royal Ontario Museum and \$10 million to the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto have greatly enriched the province's arts and academic communities.

For decades, Jamaicans from all walks of life have settled and continued to settle in Ontario. They came as domestic servants, farm workers, labourers, students, nurses, teachers, artisans and trained professionals. Many have risen to the top in their fields of endeavour, and many have made enormous sacrifices that have allowed me and others to enjoy our freedoms and opportunities. It is with great humility that I take this opportunity to thank them.

Jamaicans tend to have a can-do attitude, and are hard-working and committed to excellence. We have a Jamaican patois saying which translates to: We are small, but we are strong.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Wait a minute. We're small.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Like me, you know.

It is with that indomitable spirit that Jamaicans like me have embraced life in Ontario. It is with that spirit that Bromley Armstrong so bravely promoted equal rights for blacks and West Indians in Canada, and, in response to delegations to the Ontario Legislature which he was involved in, Ontario passed two laws: the Fair Employment Practices Act and the Fair Accommodations Practices Act; that Lincoln Alexander, a World War II veteran, became Lieutenant Governor of Ontario; that Dr. Avis Glaze excelled internationally in her role as an educator and community leader.

It is with that spirit that Ben Johnson and Donovan Bailey, great Olympic sprinters, blazed down the track and became two of the most famous athletes in the world; that Delores Lawrence, an Ontario business leader, dared to be her own boss and blazed a trail in business; and the late Louise Bennett Coverley entertained with both audacity and charm as she spread the rich Jamaican culture through her poetry, singing and cultural activism. She showed us how to appreciate and embrace our rich history and culture.

With this spirit, Stanley Grizzle, who is here in the Legislature with us today, became the first black Canadian candidate to run for an election to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in 1959. Welcome, Mr. Grizzle.

We all remember the keen intellect and grace of our former colleague, Alvin Curling, former Speaker of this honourable House; and we remember Mary Anne Chambers, the first Jamaican-born woman to be elected to this Legislature.

Ontario is known for its multiculturalism and, certainly, being of Jamaican heritage, this is a concept I am intimately connected with because Jamaica's motto, "Out of many, one people," echoes this inclusiveness. As I go about my constituency and across Ontario, I see Jamaican restaurants alongside those of other ethnic communities. I hear the lilt of the Jamaican accent, which I love, among the melody of the various voices. I hear the strains of

reggae music and of course my favourite, like my colleague, Bas Balkissoon, One Love by legendary Jamaican-born Bob Marley, one of the greatest musicians of all time.

I am proud that the stories and contributions of Jamaican Ontarians are not just mine but are ours collectively. Ontarians can take pride in the fact that this province has been so welcoming to those of us in search of a better life. It has allowed Jamaican Canadians to make great contributions to this province. This is a legacy of Jamaican-born Ontarians; the legacy we want Ontarians to talk about, to write about; the legacy we want to set as an example for our children; the legacy we want our children to live; and the legacy we want to continue. This is the legacy that defines us and drives us.

I encourage my colleagues on all sides of the House to join with the member from Scarborough–Rouge River and myself in having Jamaican Independence Day, August 6, proclaimed in our great province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: How do I follow that, but to say, “Let’s get together and feel all right”—the words of Bob Marley.

I don’t see how anybody in this Legislature could not vote in favour of the private member’s motion to proclaim August 6 of each year Jamaican Independence Day. The member from Scarborough–Rouge River has done something that is long overdue for the province of Ontario, long overdue in this assembly.

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It’s rather interesting. Over the course of any given year, we in this place discuss commemorating one ethnicity’s background or another—an independence day from Jamaica; more recently, Italian Heritage Month. It amazes me that we’re here in 2010, almost 2011, and it’s taken us this long to commemorate the contribution of Jamaican Canadians, or Canadians of Jamaican origin, given the fact that, when with you look at the range of immigrants that we have who come from all over the world, Jamaicans were some of the first Canadians to establish here in this place. Jamaican Independence Day is celebrated every August 6, as the member has said, and it recognizes the date on which that nation received its independence from Great Britain in 1962. We share a heritage with Jamaica; we always have.

Prior to being granted full independence, Jamaica had, over a period of several years, gained greater freedom while remaining under the rule of the United Kingdom. In 1958 it was declared a province in the Federation of the West Indies. It left the federation upon earning its full independence, and the nation remains, as does Canada, a member of the British Commonwealth.

Jamaica’s connection to the British Empire began in the 17th century, when the British wrested it away from Spanish control. The first Jamaicans to come to Canada were known as the Maroons, and about 500 arrived in Nova Scotia in 1796. Basically, beyond the native people—the aboriginals of Canada were the first Can-

adians, and amongst them were Jamaicans. It’s not something recent; it goes back a very long way. Declaring August 6 Jamaican Independence Day in Ontario is an opportunity to recognize this significant achievement by a young nation with historically strong ties to Canada in general, and very particularly here in Ontario.

I’ve been to Jamaica myself many times, and the first thing you notice, if you’ve gone to a number of Caribbean islands, is the lushness, the greenness and the very unique aspect of that particular part of the Caribbean. It’s not a repetitive island; it’s an originating island. So when you talk about reggae, when you talk about ska, that kind of music, you’re talking about rhythms that are mimicked everywhere but came from Jamaica. Whenever I hear a Bob Marley song, I think immediately of Jamaica. Whenever I hear Hot, Hot, Hot played at a party, it makes me want to dance, and again I think of Jamaica.

Mr. Dave Levac: I just got a visual.

Mr. Peter Shurman: No. That visual you don’t want, sir.

Recently, I co-sponsored a bill, as I mentioned before, with the members from York West and Trinity–Spadina in which we declared June Italian Heritage Month. It was passed with unanimous support that day. I did that for the same reason that I am supporting my friend from Scarborough–Rouge River. I think what we have here is a crucible in the chemistry lab that we call Ontario, and it’s a great experiment and an experiment that’s bearing success. I represent a riding of tremendous diversity—about 150 different ethnicities and backgrounds—and it certainly includes Jamaican Canadians. What we need to do here, whenever we have that opportunity, is to offer appropriate recognition to the places and to the cultures from which our newer Canadians come. In the case of Jamaicans, many are newer Canadians; as I have mentioned, many were here for 200-plus years. So I say again, this is long overdue. In the case of Jamaicans who have been part of the Canadian mosaic for a very, very long time, it is indeed long overdue. Let’s have an irie day and do this.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I’ll be supporting the motion moved by the member from Scarborough–Rouge River in the same way that I supported his Bill 207, An Act to name February in each year Black History Month.

It is a time to talk about contributions. Usually, it’s the time to talk about famous people, which is nice. Given that 85% of the total Canadian population of Jamaicans is here in Ontario, that’s a big deal, and it’s an interesting fact that we want to highlight.

I agree with everything that Minister Best and the member from Scarborough–Rouge River and all the other members said. There are the famous names to mention, including Royson James, who went to Harbord Collegiate with me, although at the time we didn’t know each other very well—good writer.

Somebody, of course, mentioned Lincoln Alexander, one of my favourite Tories. One of my favourites, and

there aren't that many that I can name. There are some nice ones at the provincial level who will remain nameless. Joe Clark is another person I like a lot. A tiny little perfect mayor, I liked very much. But in this case it's Lincoln Alexander.

I include Alvin Curling as one of my friends. I also had Dr. Louise Bennett Coverley, who was mentioned, affectionately known by her stage name, Ms. Lou. She was Jamaica's foremost and most renowned folklorist, writer and storyteller. Dwight Drummond I know very well, and we meet with him from time to time when there's a Boss sale on clothing; I thought I would reveal that for the record. A lot of famous folks have been mentioned. Michael Lee-Chin wasn't mentioned, but everyone knows Michael.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Yes, he was. I mentioned him.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Did you mention him?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, there you go. Just in case.

You mentioned Stanley Grizzle who I've known. He might forget me from time to time, but I don't forget him. The area of Bloor Street between Spadina and Brunswick is often where we meet each other.

The point is that we have a tendency to talk about famous people, and we tend to forget the contribution of everybody else.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, of course, but with all due respect to all you famous people, let's not forget the multitudes who make a big contribution day in and day out who are never mentioned. Those are the people who sweat night and day. The countless women who work at two or three jobs to make ends meet, those are the real heroes for me. Ms. Best, were you one of them?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Those are the heroes for me in terms of the contribution they make on a daily basis because that's not easy to do.

Often, in the midst of celebrating the good things, we forget other issues that are important to me. I want to mention a quote by Rosemary Sadlier. This is a good quote, and I want to read it out. "When the contributions of people of African descent are acknowledged, when the achievements of black people are known, when black people are routinely included or affirmed through our curriculum, our books and the media, and treated with equality, then there will no longer be a need for Black History Month."

It's an important quote, because we want to remember who we are through Black History Month. We want to be able to remember the contribution that Jamaicans have made to this country since the 1780s—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: The 1790s.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Or the 1790s. But we cannot forget the tribulations that racialized communities face on a daily basis. We don't talk about that. In fact, we hardly ever have a motion or a resolution that speaks to racism

and how we deal with that, or racial profiling and how we deal with that, or streaming and why it happens in our school system and how we deal with that. We tend not to talk about those things.

So when we celebrated Italian Heritage Month last week, the three of us and many others that spoke to it, we all talk about the positive contributions that we made, that Jamaicans make, that everybody makes to build this country.

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But I want to always remind people of the difficulties we faced as Italians, because discrimination against Italians was big in those early years. I can't imagine what it was like in the 1920s; I know what it was like for Italian Canadians in the 1950s. But it's worse for racialized communities, and we need to talk about it so that we don't forget, and we need to talk about it so that we find a way to deal with it, because whether we like it or not, streaming still happens.

When I was a school trustee and we tracked students from grade 9 to the end of their high school career, we knew every year that racialized communities, black kids in particular, were being streamed and that many never went to university. We tracked that year after year. The question is, after 30 or 40 years that we know this, what are we doing about it? What do we do when we know?

When we had a number of black parents, mostly women, who said, "We need our own school," I was a big supporter of that. We have the first Africentric school in Toronto, and the Premier spoke against it. I understand the reasoning, but when you hear black parents saying, "Our kids are not doing well. We need to have a pilot school where we can show that our children can do well," when we hear that and we don't validate those concerns, we are on the wrong side of the issue.

For me, it was important to listen, validate what I heard and then say, "How do we deal with it?" Quite frankly, I don't want black schools, as I don't want all-Jewish schools. I don't want to see any kind of division by ethnicity. It is true that for a long time we've had Catholic schools in our system; that was constitutionally guaranteed. But I believe the English were quite happy to separate the French and give them their own schools, and there were political motivations for that. So we have a difficult history in relation to this.

But I'm not happy to segregate children by way of racialization and/or by way of different religions; I'm not happy with it. But it is important to validate the concerns of black parents. I guaranteed in my debates with people that those kids will do well, because those children and those parents and those teachers who are in that school will make success the key feature of that black school. They will show that it works, and it will work.

We're not going to be able to deal with discrimination and racism in the way I would like, but we should talk about it and we need to talk about it. Because if we don't do that, then all the multiculturalism stuff we talk about, from reggae to food, is just the nice stuff. It's like pasta is Italian. So what? In the end, if we don't maintain our

language—if you don't maintain the third languages—whatever roots we have to our past will disappear. Pasta will not hold us together. Pasta will not hold people together. It just won't. Not even pizza will hold us together, or that nice cheese on top of it.

I have a tendency to constantly make reference to problems that we still experience—that racialized communities still experience—that need to be dealt with. It would be lovely to hide it under the carpet and only talk about the good things and about the famous people who do well. But if we do that, we really forget some of the problems that many in our community are facing. It's just something I want to do each and every time, because if I don't do that, I won't feel good with myself.

I say positively on a good note that the Toronto board, for a long, long time, has had concurrent programs. We have had black heritage programs for as long as we can remember. But we're slowly losing our ability to provide appropriate funding so that those programs can continue. They're under threat continually, as are third languages in the Toronto board.

There's only about 15 to 17 schools that still provide concurrent programs and third-language learning. If we don't give them the support provincially, those programs will die. But I think they're good. I think it's good for us all that those programs continue because they're psychologically good and economically beneficial for us all.

Member from Scarborough–Rouge River, I support your motion; it's a nice motion. But we've got to talk about our challenges. We've got to talk about how we deal with it as MPPs, what we can do as MPPs to deal with the problem.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Speak to the Speaker.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, through you always, as I look at the member from Scarborough–Rouge River.

We need to face up to the challenges. We need to talk about what we're going to do in order for us to be proud about having this day that we will be celebrating from now on, because all three parties are going to be supporting this, and we all support it with pride.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I appreciate it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, it's a pleasure to support you from time to time, as it is a pleasure to support my friend from Scarborough–Rouge River in the memory of my good friend Alvin Curling, who I liked a great deal.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: The harder they come, the harder they fall.

I just want to say that we are here today to praise Jamaica. We're here to reinforce the incredible contributions Canadians of Jamaican origin have made to our country, made to Toronto and made to Ontario. I think this is the time to talk about the incredible people that we're so fortunate to have in our communities. I'm very fortunate.

As you all know, I have the heart of Little Jamaica right in my riding. It's one of the most vibrant parts of the city. Talk about food—we don't just talk about food; we eat the food every day. We eat the cow's head soup. We eat the chicken-foot soup. We eat the ox tail. We eat the jerk chicken. Every night I drive home or walk home and smell the jerk chicken barbecuing on Eglinton. People are eating rice and peas, jerk chicken, jerk pork—ginger beer. It's happening. It's not just talk; we do it.

The music: It's not just Bob Marley. Well, we know Bob Marley is the Beethoven of the 20th century, but you've got to think of Dennis Brown, Jimmy Cliff. Get beyond Bob. There are so many. The Heptones: You've got to know about the Heptones. Leroy Sibbles used to hang around Eglinton Avenue. For years, Leroy was going back and forth between Eglinton and Kingston. These are the people we have to also mention and not minimize anybody.

The incredible places: There's Rap's, there's Randy's. The best patties anywhere in the universe: Randy's on Eglinton. Mainsha, a great and very successful franchise, is going all over the world; Jamaican food that is now being franchised, it's so good. There's the Ocean Grill on Dufferin.

Wisdom's barber shop: You want to talk about Italian barbers? Never mind. The Jamaican barbers, Wisdom's on Eglinton—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Open 24 hours a day.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's 24 hours. Go to Wisdom's and get your haircut. Go to the barbers on Eglinton; never mind the Italian barbers.

Anyways, there's so much to say here. It is good to be positive about an incredible country, the most beautiful of the islands you'll ever see. I wish I was there now. But anyway, we're here and we can dream about Jamaica.

God bless Louise Bennett Coverley. She walked the streets of Toronto. She loved Toronto. She loved Jamaica. Go down to Harbourfront. You can see the room we have for her on the second floor. Louise Bennett Coverley, God bless you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Davenport.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We don't have time for your book.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: You mentioned the book. Guess who is in here with a full page? It's Alvin Curling. He's in the book.

I want to congratulate the member from Scarborough–Rouge River. Obviously, all of us are going to agree that August 6 is going to be the big day.

I want to tell you, though, very briefly what happened in 1981. In 1981, I was approached by a man called Rupert James. Rupert James used to have a boarding house on 100 Cowan Avenue; you remember him? He was a Conservative. Now there was a chance for the Liberals and for the Conservatives to get together. The NDP wasn't there at that time.

What did we do in 1981? For the first time in the history of Canada, the great flag of Jamaica was raised at

city hall. That showed that there's great co-operation, because most people thought that Jamaicans arrived after 1960. But that's not true. Jamaicans had already arrived here in 1797.

So today, as we we're here, and as our great friends are here today to help to us celebrate this special day, I say to all of the Jamaicans who are here and making a great contribution, the flag should go up again because it shows to us a great symbol of a people who can come here and make a great contribution, who can come with their children and even make a better country and a better Canada. Long live Jamaica and long live Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Scarborough–Rouge River has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I want to thank all my colleagues, from Leads–Grenville, Thornhill, Trinity–Spadina, Eglinton–Lawrence, Davenport, and especially my colleague from Scarborough–Guildwood, who all added to this debate and provided the humour that went around the room. First of all, I want to thank everyone who is here in attendance today for joining us as we debate my motion. I just realized that Gloria Richards is in the east gallery. Gloria has served many, many Speakers of this Legislature, and she is of Jamaican background.

As my colleagues went around the room and started reminding all of us of the great contributions of Jamaicans to Canada, it reminded me that when I first arrived in Toronto as a young man, the Caribbean community was very small. I had the opportunity to hang out with a lot of Jamaican people and a lot of people from my own country, the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. They all forgot a great man who provided us with that blend of music between pop, rock, reggae and calypso: Byron Lee and the Dragonaires, a world-renowned orchestra that has travelled the world and has been on many ships across the Caribbean. All of us who arrived from the Caribbean were entertained by him year after year in this particular country.

We all have some close ties to the Jamaican community. They have definitely made a contribution to this province. They've made us a better province. As we celebrate diversity as the strength of Ontario, we need to celebrate the people from Jamaica, as we celebrate all the other ethnic communities in our province. I want to thank you for the opportunity and I hope we will all support this particular motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Balkissoon's item in about 50 minutes.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government should acknowledge that Ontario families do not have an infinite ability to pay for the Premier's energy experiments, stop the collection of secret energy taxes under section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, and reimburse families the money they have already paid on secret energy taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Clark moves private member's notice of motion number 64. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Clark.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm always proud to stand in this House to speak up for the residents of Leads and Grenville, who, like people right across this province, approach their mailboxes with fear at that time of the month when they expect their hydro bill to arrive.

You know, whenever I travel in my riding, people ask me to do exactly what I am proposing in this motion today: To stand up on their behalf and tell the McGuinty government that enough is enough. People, whether they be in Brockville, Westport, Lansdowne, Spencerville, Athens or everywhere in between, are demanding relief from this never-ending list of Liberal taxes and fees.

Oh, I know that members on that side of the House are going to stand up and tell me, "Wait a minute. We're giving people back 10%. We're giving them a 10% break on their hydro bills. Didn't you get one of those handouts that we passed out this week?" Those handouts that try to confuse and hide the truth. Only a government so out of touch and off track as this one could announce that electricity rates are going up 46% and then turn around and give people a 10% rebate and expect them to be grateful.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Bait and switch.

Mr. Steve Clark: Absolutely. No one is being fooled by this attempt to give with one hand and take away with another. You know, it reminds me of that story, the Grinch who stole Christmas. The Premier is like the Grinch who breaks into your house, takes your presents, your Christmas tree, your decorations, your kids' stockings, leaves the little lump of coal and expects you to have a merry Christmas.

Well, too many Ontario families struggling to make ends meet after seven years of this government's policies are not going to have a very good Christmas. That's why I'm standing up today for Ontario residents, who simply can't afford to dig deeper every time this government and this cabinet come up with another crazy energy scheme.

Earlier today, my colleague Mr. Yakabuski, the MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, introduced his bill to repeal section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act. We all know that this Premier and this government love taxes; in fact, the only thing they love more than taxes is spending money, which, of course, is the reason why they love more taxes. We're calling today for section 26.1 to be repealed so that Premier McGuinty has one less way to access the wallets of hard-working Ontarians.

You know, the energy minister is going to deny that the government is using the so-called special purposes fund to secretly tax Ontarians; in fact, he says that they've been scrapped. But it's interesting that just a few days after the energy minister repeated those claims, his cabinet colleague the Attorney General was at an Ontario Energy Board hearing to defend them. Talk about a mixed message.

So what we're trying to do today is provide some clarity for Ontarians, both in my motion that's on the

floor now and also Mr. Yakabuski's bill. It's calling on the Premier to do three simple things: (1) acknowledge that Ontario families do not have an infinite ability to pay for his energy experiments; (2) stop the collection of secret energy taxes under section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act; and (3) reimburse Ontario families for the money that they've already paid out in secret energy taxes. Those are three simple things that the Premier can do today to show Ontario families that he understands how his costly energy experiments, smart meter tax machines and sweetheart Samsung deal have made electricity a luxury item in the province.

We talk a lot in this place about the rising cost of energy and how Ontarians actually tremble with the thought of tearing open their hydro bills to see how high the bottom line has soared this month, and it's funny that it's not just the price of the actual power that has so many people—they stop and talk to me on the street, they call me, they email my constituency office—so upset every single solitary day. It's not just the price of the actual power; it's the other ways that they've been gouged by this government on their hydro bill. It literally gets their blood boiling.

1520

I have to tell you about two great supporters of mine, Mike and Dana Purcell, who own and operate Purcell's Freshmart in Mallorytown. Never one to shy away from expressing her opinion, Dana called my office last week after faxing in her latest hydro bill to my office.

Dana told my staff, "You can tell Steve he has my permission to use our names and show our bill at Queen's Park any time he wants, if it will help get someone in this government to listen."

Actually, let me quote her note on the fax: "Please feel free to use our hydro bill to hammer home the point that McGuinty and his government have botched the hydro delivery system." That's what she wrote.

It's hard for them. It's hard, running a grocery store. It's folks like Dana and Mike who really make this province's economy work. They provide jobs, pay taxes, raise great kids and contribute to the community in which they live to make it a better place, which is why, for them, it's so frustrating when they crack open that hydro bill and see how their bill came—on their last bill, \$4,113.93 cents. I couldn't believe it; four grand. They're business people, so you know what? They expect to pay for a service. And the \$1,858 they owed for electricity is a hefty price, but that's what they used. They understand it has to be paid.

So what about the other \$2,255.22? That's where the Purcells' anger comes in. Here's how it breaks down: HST, \$470; debt retirement, \$260; delivery, \$905; provincial benefit, \$323; and—wait for it—regulatory charges, the area on the bill where Mr. McGuinty has his hidden tax, another \$271.

This bill tells the real story of why it's so hard right now for businesses and families to get ahead. It's right here in black and white. As Dana Purcell wrote, this bill hammers home the point that the McGuinty government has botched the energy file.

It's a bit ironic that I'm introducing the motion today. It takes me back to my first day in the Legislative Assembly, on March 22. Here I was, a rookie MPP, fresh off the campaign trail, full of energy, eager to take what I've heard from my constituents to the floor of Queen's Park and get the government to realize the error in its ways.

Well, I sure got an eye-opener that day. What was the big item of discussion in the House that day? It was the Premier's new, hidden hydro tax. I couldn't believe it. For weeks I'd listened to voters in my riding telling me at their doorsteps that they're tired of paying the taxes and fees implemented by this government and getting nothing in return. All the money they were sending to Toronto was just going to pay the bill for the Premier's latest boondoggle. They weren't seeing any better health care or education, just more waste and scandal.

As I listen to my colleagues here in the House, I ask myself: How can we possibly be debating the energy minister's plan to foist a \$53-million secret energy tax on hydro bills? How could the government be considering this, after the clear message I heard from folks in Leeds-Grenville, saying enough was enough?

I'm proud to say voters in my riding didn't buy your message on March 4. And considering that 76% of Ontarians say they want a new party in power, I can tell the Premier and his energy minister that it's not selling on doorsteps now.

The government can try to hide this tax and others, and I'm sure they are cooking something up right now. I just want to let families know—and again, I can't understand why the Premier didn't get the message. They sent a whole whack of their staff down to work in Leeds-Grenville. You sent a whole bunch of staff down there. Surely to goodness some of the people who sit behind the Speaker would have heard that message. I cannot believe it.

I want Ontario families to know that they can depend on PC leader Tim Hudak and PC MPPs like myself to continue to shine a light on the Premier's secret taxes until the voters are ready to flip the switch on the next government in the province of Ontario next year.

I'm pleased to be able to provide this motion. I look forward to the comments from the members opposite. I know that with the bill that the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke introduced today and with this motion that I've presented here this afternoon, we hope to hear from the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the motion from the member from Leeds-Grenville. He invokes Dr. Seuss, so I'm going to return the favour. He wants to talk about Christmas and Dr. Seuss, let me talk about something else: Let's go back in time and debate Charles Dickens and the famous novel *A Christmas Carol*. It seems that the Ghost of Christmas Past wants to come and visit us. The Ghost of Christmas Past is eerily very similar to some of the ideas that this member wants to invoke, except for the fact that they

don't go on a time machine; there was no history before 2003.

What they forgot to talk to the people about in this particular resolution is taking us back to when we had the good old days; when coal usage went up 127% and the capacity to generate went down by 1,800 megawatts. That's the equivalent of literally shutting off Niagara Falls. To take lessons from these guys, from that time machine, and be told about our energy plan when they don't have one—and the one that they tried to apply cost us \$1 billion.

When they started to talk to us about the energy that didn't take place, what happened? Well, we started to pay a debt down by previous governments, and when we looked into the record, the money that was supposedly coming off the bills and being used to retire that debt could not be found in the budget of that government. It could not be found. It's interesting.

Let's talk about what they haven't heard. They haven't heard about a plan that was being brought forward that is a long-term plan, that has gotten the endorsement from several organizations, and I'll go through those in a minute. Job creation, energy security and clean air are the three hallmarks of what this plan is prescribing for us in the province of Ontario.

I want to come to something that the member harps about, and that is the people. Fair-minded people understand that you've got to pay for the process. What did they do? They froze the prices. What did that cost? It cost \$1 billion—\$1 billion.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Zap, you're frozen. Zap. Zap.

Mr. Dave Levac: It's interesting that we're getting cackling from the other side when you start telling the history that is absent from their discussions.

The clean energy benefit, which is being pooh-pooed by them: The clean energy benefit of 10% is going to come right off the bottom of your hydro bill for the next five years. That plan was voted down by that party introducing this motion. They voted against that plan to provide 10% discounts. I'm telling you, that benefit is going to go a long way to help people with that bill.

I want to make sure that we understand what the history is, so that as this Christmas narrative continues, we don't forget that Christmas past had some problems. That is, when the Harris government and the Eves government—and the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, the Leader of the Opposition, happened to be in the government at that time—tried to deregulate and privatize Ontario's energy system and created nothing but total, complete chaos. If that was their plan, they made a really good plan. They created a mess. If it was their plan not to be able to understand how much that was going to cost—they put a freeze on it when they realized that it was going out the window. That's what cost the taxpayers a billion dollars. That's the plan, if there is one. That was then; this is now.

1530

History didn't exist with these guys. There was no problem before. We just inherited that problem. And we

made it, maybe; I don't know. But I've got to tell you, in terms of what they gave us to turn around, we've been giving you the response in terms of moving away from coal. Yes, 2014 will be the last time a piece of coal is burned for power in Ontario. That, to me, represents exactly what that government did: 127% increase in the use and losing 1,800 kilowatts of power while they were at it.

We've still got members on that side that are calling for coal. We've still got them calling for coal. Let them stand and defend it. Please, stand up and say, "Yes, we will continue burning coal." But what we do is we find little comments here and there.

Let me offer you just a little piece of proof that even some people begin to come back and say, "I do understand that there was a problem." This was a comment from the MPP from Niagara West—Glanbrook, who happens to be the leader of the party that's putting the motion forward. Here's what he said, October 20, 2010: "I think we paid a price for our energy policy in the previous government. Because we went and made a 180-degree turn."

What he's basically saying—one of the first times I've heard it—is that there was history before 2003. There was history, and it was a pretty bleak history. It was a history that yes, loved coal, did not have a plan and took money to pay back the debt on nuclear, and that money did not go on debt repayment.

The evidence was from the auditor, who said there were no payments. So where did that money go? There was no history. Now we've given a little bit of a history. My intention is to make sure that everybody understands that this motion is nothing but a Christmas joke.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to support my colleague from Leeds—Grenville on his motion here today. It's important to debate this, and it saddens me that my colleague opposite wouldn't take a more responsible view of what's happening in Ontario today.

I think the reality is, and if they took the time to meet constituents—and I understand that in their situation it's not that easy to actually go out and speak to the public at this point into time. Because if they had, as myself and our energy critic did last night at a round table with seniors—and we wanted to talk about the aging-at-home strategy, we wanted to talk about pension, we wanted to talk about the HST. But I need to assure my colleagues opposite that the number one issue that was coming up at that round table with our energy critic, Mr. Yakabuski, last evening was hydro rates and the resulting bills. If my colleagues opposite on the government benches had taken the time to actually consult with their constituents, they would understand that they have lost the confidence of the people of Ontario in dealing with this very important matter.

I'm going to read into the record a few things from my constituents because I believe that it's important. Linda Farr from Greely—Greely is a growing community in a

rural part of my riding with many young families and many seniors—says: “My hydro bill has gone from \$200 to almost \$400 in less than five months. Please stand up for us.” Linda, today Steve Clark and the Ontario PC Party are standing up for you.

I have Bill Ellam, who has contacted me: “A lot of your constituents, including myself, heat with hydro, and these bills are crippling us.” Bill Ellam has asked me to stand up for him and to stand up to this McGuinty Liberal government that believes, time and again, that they can continue to raise taxes on heat and hydro through sneaky backdoor levies that my colleague wants to shut down and that darn HST that we fought against in this Legislature and we will continue to fight that party on.

Gerald Watt of Nepean—as many of you know, Nepean–Carleton is my riding. The former city of Nepean, a great area of that, probably the majority of the old city of Nepean, is in my riding. Gerald says to me, “As a retired individual, every penny to me counts. The HST has hurt me as everything I buy has HST applied. I am going to tell you now that Dalton McGuinty has committed political suicide with his tax increases.” I think that’s probably why my colleague opposite wants to talk about Christmas past. He’s so stuck in the past that he has no regard for what his government is doing today to the taxpayers of this province.

There are seniors, like my friend Gerald Watt, who have to penny-pinch. While Mr. McGuinty is out on spending sprees with Samsung and IKEA—and he’s not buying furniture and he’s not buying radios; he’s subsidizing them for massive energy schemes that my friends, like Gerald Watt, are paying for.

Then I think of Fraser Wilton, who’s from Ottawa. He says this: “I am completely outraged at what [Mr.] McGuinty is doing with hydro and how he is effectively treating us like fools.” By the way, this is an aside and a sidebar from this quote that I’ll continue with, but I think that speaks to what Mr. McGuinty was doing with the Sussex report, where someone on that side had hired consultants to try to confuse Ontario voters about energy. That’s why you’ll always hear them say, “dirty coal” this, “clean green” this. Well, I’m going to tell you something: They’re not confusing people, because Fraser Wilton of Ottawa says he’s effectively treating us like fools. The people of Ottawa and the people of Ontario understand what this government is doing to them.

Fraser continues: “The reason for the increase in hydro rates is due to his promise to ‘green hydro’ and his sweetheart deals he is making with people and companies (including foreign nationals).

“This man has got to be stopped along with his minions that carry out his missions to treat us with a lack of respect.” I respectfully suggest that he’s talking about these minions across the way who want to revisit history in a way that completely disregards the truth.

This is a government that only looks through rose-coloured glasses, the way that they want Ontarians to see it. Well, the reality is, as my friend Fraser Wilton says, we will not be treated like fools no matter how much money you’re going to pay for Sussex Strategy Group.

Christine Goodwin—I mentioned the great village of Greely. It’s a rural community. It’s perfectly situated: 20 minutes to downtown, 20 minutes to the airport. It’s about an hour from the border with the United States and, of course, it’s actually even close to Leeds and Grenville, where my colleague is who put this bill forward. Christine says, “I just opened my monthly hydro bill from Hydro One. They have increased my monthly billing plan amount by 50%! These increases are outrageous.”

I need the members opposite, these Liberals, to think about this for a second. People don’t have an infinite supply of money to pay for Dalton McGuinty and his expensive energy schemes. They don’t have an infinite amount of money to continue to pay for the Niagara Parks Commission when they decide to go on a spending spree with the corporate card, which, by the way, is paid for in full by the taxpayers of this province. They don’t have time nor do they have the money to continue to spend on boondoggles like eHealth, Cancer Care Ontario or, everyone’s favourite, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. But that, sadly, is what’s happening. This government has given themselves the power through the Green Energy Act to increase hydro taxes via regulation. That’s what my colleague from Leeds–Grenville wants to stop in its tracks. He believes, as well as everyone in the Ontario PC caucus, that if you’re going to bring through a tax, you should have the guts to put it through this Legislature. But we’ve seen time and again that this government doesn’t have the guts.

This is the second tax in one year that they decided to put through regulation. Let me remind you the other tax was that eco tax, that eco tax that went so wrong that they had to rescind it. But they still haven’t paid over \$85 million in taxpayer dollars from consumers in this province back to those consumers.

The reality is energy utilities are going to be forced to collect this new, hidden hydro tax from an additional charge on hydro bills. The McGuinty government used this regulation to impose a \$53-million energy tax last March. Think about that.

1540

My friends opposite want to talk about rhetoric and want to mock people who celebrate Christmas, but it’s becoming tougher for people across this province to make ends meet. Can you imagine if you were the father, the breadwinner of your family, in a community? You work hard to play by the rules; you volunteer at your kids’ sports. All you want to do is pay those bills, make sure there’s money in your children’s education fund and make sure that, like in the good old days, you have a little bit of money not only to put some turkey on the table but some presents under the tree.

I’m going to tell you something: This government and the policies they’ve embarked upon have made that more difficult for people who live outside this Legislature. That’s why we’re standing up for them today.

No public notice—no public notice—was given of this tax increase. The regulation did get routinely posted on March 17, only to be hurriedly pulled down shortly after

a Toronto Star reporter began asking questions. That's how much they wanted to hide this tax increase from the public.

We're not alone, Mr. Speaker. I know you have travelled this province extensively. You've worked hard on behalf of the people of Ontario, and you have heard what I have heard. Whether it's the secret G20 law that that cabinet put in place, whether it is the eco tax that was shoved through by regulation—of course we saw later on that they rescinded that after the public outcry—and again right here: a tax increase regulation that did not hit the Ontario Legislature. Why? Because they didn't want to deal with the public backlash. But the problem is, they got caught. The only fools in here sit on the opposite side of the aisle.

I want to talk a little bit more about section 26.1. It is schedule D of the Green Energy Act. As you will recall, Speaker, at the time, this party stood tooth and nail and fought every inch of the way against that Green Energy Act because we knew it was going to have catastrophic effects for the Ontario taxpayer.

The Liberals gave themselves the power in that act to have electricity utilities collect revenue to fund Ministry of Energy conservation programs. Ontario regulation 66/10 names a specific dollar amount of \$53 million to be collected under section 26.1. Where is that money going, why is it going to them and why did they not tell the Ontario public what they did?

As I have a few minutes left, I want to talk about the eco fees again, and I think it's important. Over the summer, people across Ontario rose up. They did it by calling their MPP and by calling the media, and in many cases they actually travelled to Ottawa to protest to Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Let me quote Debbie Jodoin, who is part of a protest group against the Dalton McGuinty Liberals. She said: "We are protesting because this government backtracked on the eco tax implementation to do damage control for an ill-conceived plan. Ontarians still have not received a penny back on all these fees we were charged between July 1 and July 20. Ontarians have been ripped off by the eco fees. We want our money back, and we deserve our money back. It is ridiculous and unacceptable for any government to do this to the taxpayers. It is not your money; it is our money."

That is exactly the sentiment that my colleague from Leeds–Grenville is fighting for today. He wants to ensure that people like Debbie Jodoin, Gerald Watt, Bill Ellam, Linda Farr, Fraser Wilton and Christine Goodwin have somebody standing for them in the Ontario Legislature to stop this McGuinty government from its increased taxation.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I came to the House today, I have to tell you, somewhat confused, not about the government's energy policy, because I think we all understand and lament it very much, but about the actual wording of this motion. I don't want to be a grammarian, but I think

the honourable member needed to insert some colons and numbers and a few other things to make it readable.

If I might suggest what the honourable member is actually trying to say—he writes, "That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government should acknowledge that Ontario families do not have an infinite ability to pay for the Premier's energy experiments, stop the collection of secret energy taxes...." What he's saying is that Ontario families do not have the ability, or an inability, to stop the collection of secret taxes.

I'm suggesting that isn't what he's trying to say. I'm suggesting what he is trying to say and should have said—and perhaps he can say this in his final rebuttal—is at the end of the word "should" in the first line—there should be a colon, and then, following that, there should be a list of (a), (b), (c) or (1), (2), (3) on the three separate points, so that in fact it is grammatically correct and that he's trying to make three points.

I would surmise that is what is intended here, and I'm going to speak to that, but the wording of this as written is meaningless. I hate to tell you that, but the wording of this motion is meaningless, and if I were to vote for it, I would be voting for something that does not make sense. I'm asking the member if perhaps he can clear this up when it goes back and write it in a grammatical fashion which is logical and can be followed.

I'd like to speak about the three points. He's trying to make three points, I believe. The first one is that ordinary citizens of Ontario do not have an infinite ability to pay taxes, and I think that's a point that can be very well made. No one has that kind of infinite ability to pay taxes as they increase and increase unless there is a commensurate ability to raise one's wages or one's sources of revenue at least at the same rate as the taxes are increasing, because there will come a point, as there is today, where people's wages are not increasing to the same amount as the costs, and therein lies the rub and the difficulty in Ontario.

The second thing I think the member is trying to say is that the government should stop its secret energy taxes, and on this I would have very little to quibble with him, because the taxes that have been introduced in this province have been done in a very secretive way. I start with the HST. Up until a week or so before the HST was announced by the Premier, there were denials by this government that anything of the sort was being contemplated. All the while, the finance minister was in Ottawa with his counterpart, James Flaherty, sitting down and hammering out the deal and signing the deal secretly, unbeknownst to the whole population of this province, including the entire population on the back bench of that government. I think there were no people more surprised than opposition members. If there were, the only people who would probably be more surprised are the members sitting there on the back bench when this was unfolded and told to them that it was a fait accompli and that it was going to be part of the budget speech the next morning. It was really a secret energy and secret deal made around taxation, just as the eco tax was.

I remember my shock and surprise going into the Canadian Tire store in Amherstburg to buy some paint. I was there just to buy a gallon of paint, and when I took the paint up, the person told me that there was HST, which I had come to expect would probably be on the gallon of paint—it was a little bit after July—but he also told me that there was a new eco tax on it. He said, “This has been imposed by the province of Ontario,” and I looked quizzically at him and said, “Are you sure? I’m a member of the Ontario Legislature and I don’t remember anybody passing an eco tax on paint.” I said, “Are you sure about this?” and he brought out some regulation or something that had been sent from Canadian Tire headquarters and showed it to me, and sure enough, there was an eco tax.

You can imagine the surprise and chagrin that I had—and I’m sure all members of this Legislature would have—to find out that that had been secretly imposed without a single word of debate in this House, and if I was angry, let me tell you, the people of Ontario were far more angry than I was for having to pay a few cents eco tax on a gallon of latex paint; they were livid. And this government was forced, in very short order, to back down on what had been a very, very foolish implementation plan.

1550

This is also, of course, this government’s own record on the wasting of billions of dollars of taxpayers’ money, everything from eHealth to the Oakville gas plant. I don’t think there was ever such an ill-conceived and silly idea by this government as to put a gas plant in downtown Oakville, within a few hundred metres of homes and schools and factories and businesses and places where people congregate, along a busy highway. It was one of the singularly dumbest ideas that was ever floated in this Legislature. I’m glad that the people of Oakville came to their senses. I’m glad the people of Oakville hired Erin Brockovich and did all the things that they did in order to have this killed.

But at the same time, I’m ever so mindful, as is the member from Oakville, that one day the government is going to have to pony up and is going to have to pay for this big mistake, because contracts were signed with TransAlta. Contracts were signed and legalisms were undertaken, and one day, somebody is going to have to pay for all this. But I would hazard a guess that this is going to be well hidden and is not going to become public and come to light until some magical day shortly after October 6, 2011, because on that day and only on that day is it going to be revealed how much it is going to cost the people of Ontario to have done, finally, what is right, but to have started off on such a wrong-headed, chaotic approach by saying that the energy was absolutely needed.

You know, when I listen to this government on energy, I have to say a very good French expression: “Mon oeil!” In English it means “my eye,” but it means much more than that; it’s like this is totally unbelievable, disbelievable. You have a government and ministers one

day saying that the lights are all going to go out and that we need this hydro and we need these sources of energy and Ontarians are so desperate to have them. They show you charts and they tell you that this is all going to happen unless you follow their economic and social and hydro plans. Then, the next day, they can turn right around, as they did in Oakville, and say that the energy is not necessary after all.

So I think the member from Leads–Grenville was a little bit on to something: the secret energy taxes, the secret energy consultations, the secret, secret everything that’s going on around here.

On the last thing he’s asking for I do have a bit of a problem, because I don’t know how it would possibly be undertaken. He has asked that the people be reimbursed for the taxes. Now, I don’t know how I would go about, unless I still have all those bills and people have all those bills of all those things they bought on the eco tax—to go back to the Canadian Tire store, to go back to Home Depot, to Home Hardware, to Sears or whatever places they bought them in the first place and say, “I want the tax reimbursed.” Because every single store levied the tax in a different way. Nobody understood it. I don’t know how you could possibly ever go back and say, “I want the taxes.” Some stores will say, “We didn’t charge any on that.” Some stores would say, “We charged twice that much on that particular item, but none on this one over here.” It was done in such a haphazard fashion and taken out so fast, I’m unsure how the member from Leads–Grenville anticipates that we are going to take back or be able to reimburse those taxes.

One of the members earlier, the member from Brant, talked about Charles Dickens. He is, in fact, one of my favourite authors.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Send them a lump of coal.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no, no. I think what he said was “a pox on all the lawyers;” I think that was his best one.

But what A Christmas Carol said and what the character Scrooge undertook was not just going into the future. The character went to see his past, he went to see his present and he went to see his future. When he went to see his past, he lamented on what he had missed in his boyhood, how he had been treated, how he had become the man he had become and was very uncomfortable with. When he saw the present, he saw all of those people in the past who had better lives than his, even though they may not be rich like he was, people who helped the poor. He saw his fiancée at one point. When he saw the future, that was the ghost. I remember Alastair Sim most especially, a brilliant actor, saying, “This is the ghost I fear most of all,” because he feared what was going to happen in the future.

Perhaps that’s what the Liberals should be thinking about here today, too. Perhaps they should be looking at the ghost of Christmas future and what is likely to happen to them unless they lament their ways, because if they lament their ways, as Scrooge did, there is a much brighter future. He was able to change his ways. He was

able to save Tiny Tim. He was able to do all of those things and be revered by the people because they changed their ways because they saw the ghost of Christmas future.

I'm asking the government members over there to see that ghost, see that it's not too late to change, that you can be better people. I'm asking you to look at that and say that if you follow that path, you're going to find a wind-blown political grave with blowing around and nobody even willing to come to the funeral service unless they are properly fed. I think you'll remember that scene as well.

What I'm saying is that the member from Leeds–Grenville has brought forward something I think is reasonable. I hope he amends it. I hope he makes it grammatically correct, and I hope he explains to all of us how he intends to reimburse those taxes, because there's little or no record of them.

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand up and speak on this motion from the member from Leeds–Grenville. I like the member, but when I looked at his motion, I couldn't find anything important to support. I looked at it from top to bottom, inside and out, and I couldn't find anything tangible to support, just a bunch of words put together talking about a secret deal and secret taxes. I don't know what he was talking about.

Anyway, I listened to the many members who spoke before me. At least for the people of Ontario we have a plan for energy. We have a vision for energy for the province of Ontario. We have a plan. The opposite side has no plan, just a bunch of rhetoric. They talk about politics, talking about this and this and this.

The member from Brant spoke for many minutes and explained to the people of Ontario that, before 2003, we didn't have a sufficient supply of energy for the people. We were short more than 2,000 megawatts. That's why we had the blackout. The price was an artificial price for many years, and it was costing the taxpayers of Ontario \$1 billion on a yearly basis.

The bill has three components to it: You have the price, you have the debt retirement and you have the taxes. Either you have a real price and you eliminate the debt retirement, or you have an artificial price and increase the debt retirement, which is what the other party did for many years. They increased the debt from \$6 billion from \$19 billion to \$20 billion.

We have to be honest with ourselves. We have to build a vision for the people of Ontario. We have to put a real price on the table for the people of Ontario. We have to offer incentives and tell them, "If you conserve, you can save money."

We have introduced smart meter technology for the people of Ontario. We have to introduce the latest technology to run our energy in the province of Ontario. It's important for all of us and for the future of this province.

I listened to the member from Beaches–East York talking about a plan and a vision and how it's not too late

for to us correct our vision. But you know what? We have no secrets here. Everything is open. We have a plan printed. You can go to the website and see it. There is also a booklet where you can read the details about our plan for the next 20 years, how we see the province of Ontario producing hydro, whether clean energy hydro from solar and windmills, renewables from methane or gas and how we are going to eliminate coal generation in the province because it causes our people a lot of pain, it makes them sick and causes a lot of deaths in Ontario. That's what our plan is.

Also, we understand that people are going through a tough time. That's why we introduced a 10% reduction on every bill, to support the families of this province, the hard-working people of the province of Ontario.

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Besides that, our strategy for energy in the province of Ontario is not just about producing clean energy; it's about creating jobs. I have a huge list. If we're talking about creating jobs: Windsor, 300 jobs; Tillsonburg, 300 jobs; 375 jobs in Windsor; in Guelph, 800 jobs; Kingston, 1,200 jobs; Oakville, 200 jobs; Welland, 1,000 jobs—jobs everywhere as a result of our plan, our strategy for clean energy for the people of Ontario. Why doesn't the opposite party talk about this? Show us your plan; I'll support it tomorrow. Show me that you have a tangible plan; I'll support it tomorrow.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Show us the money that you wasted in eHealth.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: We did show you our plan. Our plan is open. Our plan is clear. You can see it anytime on the website. If you want a booklet, I can supply you with a booklet to tell you how we see our energy, not for tomorrow, not for next year, but for the next 20 years. That's why many people from everywhere on the whole planet are coming to Ontario: to learn from our strategy; to learn about our strategy for clean air.

That party lives in the dark, and they want the people of Ontario to live in the dark. This party belongs to the old era, and we now live in the 21st century, the century of technology, which we introduced to the people of Ontario. We want people to live happy and healthy. That's why we introduced clean energy. Clean energy is a perfect fit to attract more companies to help open Ontario—enough supply for everyone who wants to open a factory, enough for every household in the province of Ontario. Besides that, we're going to create 50,000 jobs for the people of Ontario to enjoy and maintain our prosperity.

I've spoken enough. Many people spoke before me. I'd like to support the member, but he didn't offer anything to support. I'm sorry, my friend. You know what? Hopefully, next time, when you introduce a bill, a tangible benefit to me as the member for London–Fanshawe or the people of Ontario, I'll be willing to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Leeds–Grenville has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to acknowledge the members for Brant, Nepean–Carleton, Beaches–East York and London–Fanshawe—

Interruption.

Mr. Steve Clark: —as the trumpets play outside the Legislature.

I'm very pleased to provide a couple of comments, and I appreciate some of the wordsmithing advice from the member for Beaches–East York.

I think it was very clear that, whether it be the bill that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke introduced today, or the motion, what we're trying to do on this side of the House is acknowledge that enough is enough.

I believe the motion was extremely clear. It talked about three things—and I appreciate the member beside me asking for some clarity. The fact that people do not have an infinite ability to pay for whatever this government feels is appropriate, the fact that there is this provision in section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act that this government could clear up very easily by removing that section, by stopping that—I'm not talking about the past, I'm not talking about energy plans or some of the other things that are brought up but the fact that people have an expectation that they want to break.

Quite frankly, the third item asking for reimbursement of monies that have been paid under this secret energy plan—the money should be given back to people. The frustration out there, the fact that people feel that enough is enough—the member for Nepean–Carleton talked about what we've been hearing in our corner of the province, and it's the same everywhere we travel, no matter where in the province of Ontario. People are fed up, and come October 6, 2011, they're going to flip the switch on that government right there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON
MONOXIDE DETECTORS), 2010
LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2010
(DÉTECTEURS DE MONOXYDE
DE CARBONE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 55, standing in the name of Mr. Hardeman. I ask members to take your seats, please.

Mr. Hardeman has moved second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in all residential buildings.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hardeman?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, refer it to the committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Shall this be referred to the committee on general government? So ordered.

JAMAICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 56.

Mr. Balkissoon has moved private member's notice of motion number 57. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

TAXATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ballot item number 57.

Mr. Clark has moved private member's notice of motion number 64. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

In accordance with the agreement of the House earlier today, the vote is deferred until deferred votes on Monday, December 6, 2010.

Vote deferred.

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

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1606.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

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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	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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Motion agreed to.....	3946
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Taxation

Vote deferred	3946
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