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of Debates
(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 12 September 2012

Mercredi 12 septembre 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 12 September 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 12 septembre 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY HOMES RENOVATION
TAX CREDIT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT
POUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU LOGEMENT
AXÉ SUR LE BIEN-ÊTRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 11, 2012, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit / Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts en vue de mettre en oeuvre le crédit d'impôt pour l'aménagement du logement axé sur le bien-être.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to complete my remarks from yesterday. I just want to put it into reference here. This Bill 2, which is the healthy homes renovation tax credit, is simply window dressing, as has been said by many. Others have used the term "half measures."

I think I've made reference to the logistics of it all. Technically, to renovate homes for seniors is a laudable idea, but in the context of what they're actually doing to seniors, it's even more troubling. They're not building any more long-term-care beds. They're now regulating retirement homes, which is a tax on seniors—when you move into a retirement home, there's this new tax of about \$15 a month—on top of the HST and home heating and all the other issues. Then there's home care. There's not enough time for home care. For my constituents, the biggest complaint I get is there's nothing in that home care envelope for them.

We have an aging population. They know it. Their strategy is called aging at home, but it's really aging alone, and this bill does nothing to help people. It really is simply window dressing.

There's a very scathing report that was issued a few days ago called Falling Behind. What it says here, in my last remarks, is that Ontario is the worst in Canada when it comes to growing poverty, increasing income inequity and financial support for public services. This is a coalition report.

This government has lost its way and seniors are paying the biggest price. These are the very people, our mothers and fathers, who built this country. So I can't support it in the extent that it's going forward, but I look forward to others' remarks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I am happy to rise and lend my voice to this debate. It's something that we know is good. We do think that seniors need help, but it's unfortunately just not enough. To be giving a tax credit on \$10,000 or less, if it may be, isn't going to help families who are already struggling. For families who don't have enough money to keep the hydro on, how are they going to come up with this extra money to make it work?

I know when I was campaigning in my riding and knocking on doors, I had seniors—one who had an oxygen mask on her face, and here she is with her grown son, who also can't live independently. How is something like this going to help that family? We need real, sincere things that are going to make a difference in a senior's life. How about our initiative to take the HST off home hydro? Things like that would be a serious effect to a senior's health, to their home life and to keeping them happy in their homes.

We have a lot of bigger issues than this small little bill would deal with. I just believe that we can do better, and I hope that this government will look at things that will do better and not just the little piece that's going to make them look good at the end of the day, saying that they're helping seniors with a new tax credit, because unfortunately it really is just not going to do enough for the seniors in my riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to rise again to speak about the healthy homes tax renovation credit. I've continued to speak on this and the importance of this bill in the context of our overall strategy to support seniors who wish to remain independent, at home, with dignity as they age.

A number of members opposite yesterday wanted to see the numbers, and I would just like to kindly refer them to Hansard last week where I spoke at length about the number of seniors, the tens of thousands of seniors we expect to benefit from this bill.

We also had a question from members opposite about the cost of this bill. I would refer them to the budget that contains the financial strategy for how this program will be funded.

I also want to take the opportunity to remind everybody in the House and everybody who's watching that this credit is not just for seniors who own or rent a dwelling, but it's for family members who perhaps have a parent or grandparent who want to apply for the healthy homes tax renovation credit.

Another myth I'd like to dispel is that the bill does not require that renovations be made of \$10,000; it's up to \$10,000 to receive a tax credit.

Again, the important thing is, this is part of a broader strategy. We've invested in more PSWs to help seniors at home; that's already happened. We have an aging strategy. We have an ongoing commitment for seniors who do need long-term care; that commitment continues. This strategy on the healthy homes tax renovation credit is to help people who want to stay at home to stay home as long as they can and age with dignity and grace.

Thank you very much. It's always a pleasure to get up and speak about this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I made a point of getting back here this morning to hear the rest of the speech of my colleague from Durham because it's always an enjoyable and riveting experience to be part of that. He touched upon a lot of things, as the member for Hamilton Centre did as well.

This government has wonderful words about how they're providing this or that or more for our seniors. But I can tell you in my constituency office, as the member from Durham talked about yesterday, every day we get more files opened and calls concerned about the inability to get that home care service that this government talks about providing so much of.

The bill is a whole lot of fancy words and verbal commitments, but the reality is that there's nothing there. The things that people need, the things that seniors need, are not being taken care of.

They come out with this tax credit for renovations to supposedly keep people at home. When the furnace is gone, it costs \$4,000 or \$5,000 to replace a furnace. This bill won't help them, won't help them at all. When they can't pay the hydro, this bill won't help them. When they can't pay their taxes, this bill won't help them. But no, if you've got the money to spend on a renovation to make it more disability accessible, "Oh, well, we're going to back you up on that."

This is about knocking off the dominos one at a time on the support issue, and when I say support, I talk about the political support. This is, one at a time, picking on this group or that group and saying, "Look what we're doing for you. Aren't we wonderful? My name is Dalton McGuinty. Don't forget me in the next election." That's the kind of stuff that's going on here with this bill, when there are real problems for seniors at home and they are not addressing them. That's what's missing here. What are you doing to address the real problems for seniors at home?

0910

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise. In Algoma-Manitoulin, this bill may help some. You know what? It may actually help a few more than some. It's a bill that makes a small contribution in terms of providing that financial assistance. Let's face it, not every senior out there, not every one of those households, has this \$10,000 to spend on their homes, or as my friend the member from across the way said, up to \$10,000.

Most seniors can't even afford their hydro bill at the end of the month. Most seniors are struggling, having problems affording their full complement of groceries and good, healthy food at the end of the month. That's where we should be putting a lot of our efforts and really providing them with the assistance they actually need.

A small step forward would actually be looking at endorsing the bill I proposed on the HST. That is something tangible they can put their teeth into that will give them the extra monies they need at the end of the month to meet their monthly requirements.

What we'd also like to see in this bill, which isn't in there, is that there is no domestic content requirement in terms of the procurement of either construction materials or medical assistive devices. We should look at making sure that is in there, that that is part of this bill. That is something that will definitely help seniors in our communities.

It really troubles me when we look at making that nice bullet—the headline—that makes the newspaper, where it says the government of the day is helping seniors. I agree with a lot of the comments the preceding member made, but we really need to look at how we can make this bill actually work so it can be beneficial to our seniors as a whole.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Durham has two minutes to reply.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to acknowledge and thank the members from Hamilton Mountain, Pickering-Scarborough East, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Algoma-Manitoulin.

I would only say this: The common theme I heard is, it's too little too late—whether it's their heating bill, whether they can afford it or whether they can afford drugs that have gone up, the price of gas; just the common things.

But one thing that we—that's Tim Hudak and Andrea Horwath—agreed on together is that we acknowledge that one of the best and simplest things to implement would be to reduce the HST on home heating. It's doable, we agreed with it, it was in our election platform and the NDP agreed with it as well. That would be my message to the minister, if he's even interested in listening. But it seems that they have only one desire.

The HST itself is the biggest single burden on seniors today. Every single thing they get, whether it's physiotherapy, having their income tax done or buying gasoline,

it costs more—13% more on every single thing I've mentioned. So they take 13% right out of the pocket of every senior in Ontario. The price of gas—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order, order.

Mr. John O'Toole: I've touched a nerve.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. John O'Toole: They can respond if they wish, but here's the truth. Why is gasoline so expensive? Gasoline in itself is an example where it's now going to cost 8% more—8% more on gasoline alone. If gas is too expensive, eight cents of it is the HST, eight cents of it. Every single thing you buy or every service you get costs more in Ontario and you get less.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would ask that the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan withdraw his comments directed at my colleague from Durham, questioning whether or not my colleague was actually telling the truth. That is not allowed in this House, and I would ask the member to stand up and withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I will ask the member from Thunder Bay—you can shake your head and shrug your shoulders, but it won't help you. I'm asking you to calm it down a bit and don't make direct accusations if you can help it, okay? All right?

As far as ruling him out of order: I don't think it's a point of order. I will decide whether he's crossed the line or not. Thank you to the member from Renfrew. That's the end of that discussion.

Continue, member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 2, which the government named the healthy homes tax credit. It took me a while, Mr. Speaker, to figure out why they named it that, and then I realized that it was because the tax credit is only to help make the home healthier but not make it healthier for the people in the home. Because, in fact, as we go through the notes, we will find that the people who really needed that help to make the home healthier for them—it's really not available for them.

The government is trying to make people believe this bill will make it affordable for seniors who are struggling to stay in their homes, but that simply is not true. This bill gives seniors a tax credit of 15% on home renovations to a maximum of \$1,500 a year. That means the senior still is responsible for 85%. On renovations of \$10,000, the senior will have to pay \$8,500. Now if the renovation costs \$20,000, that will be over the maximum, and the senior will then have to pay \$18,500. For many seniors, Mr. Speaker, that's simply not an option.

Income levels have no impact on the amount of support that seniors would receive. So the wealthy senior who can already afford the renovations will be able to

use it; the senior who is living on modest means is not going to be able to benefit from that because they cannot come up with the 85%. For seniors who are already struggling to pay their bills, the 85% they are responsible for means that they still can't afford to renovate their homes. They can't afford to put in new accessible showers or ramps, no matter how much the government pretends otherwise.

In fact, at \$10,000, about half of the tax credit goes to cover the increased taxes on home renovations thanks to the Liberals' HST. Now, if the renovations cost \$20,000, the whole tax credit will go simply to cover the increased cost of the HST—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There are nine sidebars going on. I cannot hear the member, and he's right beside me. So I would suggest if you have any discussions you want to carry on, you know where you can go: out in the lobby. I don't want to have to warn you again. Thank you very much.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's the end of that discussion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, it is.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, this was an election promise designed to distract people from the concerns about the rapidly increasing cost of living in Ontario. There was no real implementation plan.

Seniors on fixed incomes are among those people who have been hardest hit by the government's policies that are leading to spiralling hydro costs, increased taxes and families having less and less money left at the end of every month. The HST increased the cost of hundreds of items and services, including many of those that seniors rely on to stay in their homes, such as snow removal, firewood and lawn maintenance. It also cut into their incomes by increasing the taxes on everything from magazines and vitamins to haircuts. It forced the cost of hydro up 8%, in addition to all the increases caused by this government's extensive green energy experiments. In fact, this government's own documents revealed that the cost of energy is set to go up 46%. I've heard from many seniors in my riding that the cost of hydro is making it unaffordable to stay in their homes.

And it seems the government continues to hit seniors with extra costs every time they turn around, such as increasing the fees of driver's licences and vehicle plate stickers. For seniors in many areas of my riding, the ability to stay in their home requires that they still be able to drive, but with these increased costs and increasing insurance, this simply is becoming more and more of a challenge.

This tax credit won't address these problems. It won't help the struggling senior who needs the support the most. It's really just a public relations exercise to make it look like this government is doing something. The seniors in my riding, Mr. Speaker, are smarter than that.

0920

If the government really believed that this tax credit was to provide a significant benefit to seniors, they

would have brought this bill forward for debate more often last fall and this spring, instead of choosing other priorities. Mr. Speaker, this bill was introduced as bill number 2, the first one after the election. Here we are today, almost a year later, and we're still debating the same bill. If they really believed it was going to make a difference, we would have been debating it two weeks ago, instead of spending two and a half hours debating a motion on full-day kindergarten which doesn't make any legislative changes. It makes you wonder whether introducing this right away when they were re-elected had more to do with public relations and pretending to care for seniors than actually doing something to help our seniors.

There are many things that we should be doing to help our seniors. We need to look at long-term-care homes. We need to look at home care. We need to stop the spiraling cost of living so they can actually afford to stay in their homes, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, if this bill actually assisted low-income seniors, like this government claims, they would have created a new problem for the very people this bill was supposed to help. Last year, when he was on the campaign trail, the Premier told seniors to go ahead and spend the money for the renovations, because anything from October 1 onwards would be covered. When the Liberals introduced the bill, they included a clause to make it retroactive to October 1, 2011, but they haven't made the bill a priority. They didn't warn those seniors that almost a year after they spent the money, the bill still wouldn't be passed. Very few low-income seniors can afford to do renovations not knowing whether they would qualify and having to wait a year for the money, so having it retroactive to last year is really only benefitting those who can already afford to do the renovations.

You remember during the campaign that the Premier said he was implementing this tax credit early because of the concerns with our economy. He predicted that implementing it early would create the demand for more skilled jobs. The media reported, "At a campaign stop in Pickering on Thursday, McGuinty promised to roll out a tax credit for home renovations 15 months early in an effort to stir up new jobs." Although the articles described the Premier being asked about the jobs, "He couldn't say how many more jobs will come from applying the credit to renovations starting October 1 instead of the original rollout" date. So there was absolutely no plan or no projections done on what the benefit of moving it up 15 months would be. If he didn't know what was going to happen in the first months, I expect he had absolutely no information on what was going to happen after the 15 months either.

If moving the start date up to October was going to have such a big impact on the economy and the lives of our seniors, why is it that, almost 10 months after introducing the bill, we are here debating it today? If he was so worried about the economy, and this bill was going to make a difference, why didn't the government bring forward this bill for debate more often? Once again, it

shows this bill is about public relations. It isn't really about helping our seniors or creating jobs. In fact, it has become clear that the Liberals still do not have a jobs plan.

Mr. Speaker, this reminds me of the warning to always check the fine print. In fact, the people of Ontario have discovered that is always a good policy with Liberal campaign promises, because many of them appear to be more about good public relations than good policy. If they are delivered at all, they aren't quite what the people were led to believe they were getting, just like the Liberals' commitment in the last election when they promised to create one-window access for our farmers. That, a year later, still has not been done. Now, when you ask the Minister of Agriculture about that, he says he believes in a no-wrong-window approach, Mr. Speaker, and I ask you and all the members of this House what that could mean: no-wrong-window approach.

Of course, there was the famous campaign promise in 2003, when McGuinty looked Ontario voters in the eye and said, "I won't cut your taxes, but I won't raise them either." He then proceeded to introduce the health tax, the HST, and cancelled the planned corporate tax decreases.

On this side of the House, we take a different approach. We believe that, rather than implementing a tax credit that barely covers the sales tax, the government would be better to look at policy that actually improves the lives of our seniors, to make it so they don't need to be afraid every time their hydro bill arrives, to make it so they feel their government works for them instead of tying them up in red tape and continually hitting them with additional costs. We believe that a government should have a real jobs plan. We believe that governing a province should be about good policy, not just good public relations. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me a few moments to speak to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to rise today to talk about the healthy homes renovation tax credit bill that is here before us.

The purpose of this bill that the Liberal Party has brought over is that they're trying to meet one of the major planks they had in their platform last election, and that's to assist seniors. So in bringing this bill forward, their intent is to keep seniors—those who have health issues and might need aids or home renovations in order to remain there—in their homes longer. So we agree with the intent of the bill.

The other part of the bill is that they're saying they're going to create 10,500 more jobs to stimulate the economy. But as my colleague said earlier, there's no clause in there for procurement, a buy Ontario policy, or also to assist seniors with small medical devices they might need. They might not need a whole bathroom, but they might need a handrail in the bathroom, and they may have to ask a contractor to install that. That also costs extra money. When you look at the small amount they may have to spend, which is a lot to seniors because

they're on a fixed income—a lot of seniors are women who are living in poverty—they don't even have that small amount to pay. And if they do, they're going to get a very tiny tax credit on that.

The beauty of the bill—and it's not so good-looking once you look at it; it's kind of very distasteful—is that you have to spend at least \$10,000, and most seniors who are struggling today do not have \$10,000—

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Up to.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —up to—to recover up to \$1,500.

I understand the intent of the bill, but it's not going to help seniors who really need it, who are in poverty and are on such fixed incomes. They can't even make those small renovations, let alone up to \$10,000. So the intent is there, but this bill really doesn't go far enough to help the seniors who truly need help to stay in their homes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak for a couple of minutes. I think it's really important to recognize some key facts.

Yes, it is true that this was part of our party's election platform, and I'm really proud that the first thing we did after getting elected as a government was to fulfill that campaign commitment. I think that's a good thing, and people did vote for this party as a government to ensure that the promises made in the campaign were fulfilled.

The second important point to talk about is that it's not a commitment that somebody has to spend at least \$10,000; it's up to \$10,000. Somebody can spend \$1, \$2, \$10,000, \$500, and they will get a certain portion back for making their homes more affordable. I've spoken in this House many times—if you go to a Home Hardware, as my friend the member from Peterborough likes to talk about, or to Conval-Aid, which is a very specialized business in my community in Ottawa that provides equipment for seniors, these things—for example, an elevator or chair lift costs about \$4,000 with installation, and 15% is a significant saving on those type of things.

To the member for Oxford's comments, yes, healthy homes result in healthy families. We want to make sure our seniors continue to live at home if they have a home and they're living in their home. That's a good thing. That will allow them to ensure they have independent dignity. If you speak to any senior, they'll tell you they don't want to be in a long-term-care facility, they don't want to be in a retirement home, they don't want to live with their loved ones. They want to live independently in their home. It is incumbent on us to take every opportunity, every step to facilitate that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak about this yet again.

We on this side of the House have said over and over that this bill is tinkering at the edges. Our member from—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Oxford.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —Oxford eloquently said this morning that this is window dressing. What the pressing issues really are, Speaker, are about the 600,000 men and women who woke up this morning without a job.

0930

Now, it's interesting in Ontario. We have a dichotomy happening here. Two weeks ago Friday, I visited Central Welding in North Bay, a long-time family-owned business, and the owner and his son Erik Thomsen brought me through the facility on Friday. The one problem that they shared with me is they cannot find skilled workers in Ontario. That's the kind of issue we should be addressing here. Central Welding, who would like to expand, who build bridges and steel structures all over the world, cannot find skilled trades in our city, yet we have high unemployment in Ontario, 600,000 men and women. We have a disconnect between the people who are looking for work and the companies that need workers.

On Sunday night, I went to the Eid dinner in North Bay, and at the table I sat with two young men who I'd never met there before, and they explained to me they are brand new to North Bay. They moved here Friday. They are welders who moved here from Tunisia to work at yet another steel manufacturing company in North Bay. Business is very good for those companies if they were able to find the employees. We have a disconnect between the 600,000 who are not working in Ontario and those companies who are looking for men and women.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Miss Monique Taylor: Again, I'm pleased to be able to stand to add a few more comments to this debate, because I've been sitting here going through my stuff and recollecting so far back when we originally started this debate.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: A very long time ago.

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes, it's been a while. So it came back to me: This is another one of those Liberal initiatives that if people have money, they'll be rewarded; they'll get the money back. People who don't have money are not going to be able to use this tax credit. We need to come up with things that maybe—loaning the money up front for people who need it might be helpful. It would be easier for them to then pay back small loans, because we know we're not getting anything for free.

The NDP had come out with real solutions in their campaign for assisting seniors: solutions like more hours into home care, programs for home maintenance, cutting the grass, shovelling snow, getting groceries. These are the things that are really going to affect a senior's life. These are the things that they're struggling with. If a senior isn't able to shovel their snow in Hamilton, bylaw's going to show up not knowing that it's a senior—not that it matters, because they didn't shovel their snow. What's going to happen? They're going to get a ticket from bylaw for not cleaning their sidewalks.

These are the kinds of things that seniors struggle with, and they're things that I heard on a daily basis

before I was elected to this office. So we need more. This bill certainly isn't going to do it. We need to make sure that we're taking care of seniors in a proper way, where they actually can stay in their homes, because saying that the rich people can stay in their homes and people who can't afford it can't is a two-tier system for our seniors, and not exactly what Ontarians deserve. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Oxford has two minutes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Ottawa Centre, Nipissing and Hamilton Mountain for their comments to my presentation.

I just want to point out that the member from Ottawa Centre I think pointed out the essence of my, shall we say, opposition to this bill when he said that this was an election promise of a year ago and nothing has been done yet, but he's very proud of the fact that we're now working on it. I think this is the way that they look at it. They don't understand that the problem with the bill is that it was intended to help people who couldn't afford the total cost of doing it themselves, but if we are debating that bill today, all those people were not able to implement anything because they needed approval for it. It wasn't good enough, because the Premier's word is not considered that good in the province, when he said, "Don't worry about it. We're going to introduce it. We're going to make it retroactive." So they couldn't afford to put their name on the bill of lading when they delivered the product because they didn't know when they were going to get the money, or if their application would even be approved.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of exceptions in this bill of what doesn't qualify for the tax credit. So people who could not afford it upfront and needed that to make it happen, they had absolutely no way of knowing that they would be eligible, so they are still waiting to make the application. All the applications, all the jobs that have been done—if any have been done on this program—are being done by people who could afford to do it without the tax credit.

So I think the money would have been much better spent on things like reducing the cost of living in Ontario, so these people could pay their hydro bills and stay in their own homes. They could pay for their other services they need around the home, as I mentioned in my remarks, and have to pay 8% more because of the HST. If, instead of a healthy homes tax credit, they would have made it a healthy seniors tax credit, they could get a tax credit for some of the things they have extra costs on because of this government's actions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased today to rise today to give comments on the healthy homes renovation tax credit, Bill 2. I will emphasize that it was brought in a long, long time ago, and we're still discussing Bill 2, but the government controls that agenda.

My riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock is home to an increasingly large number of seniors. In fact, according to the most recent census data, which is available from Statistics Canada, nearly 20% of the population of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock is over the age of 65; this compares to a provincial level of 13%. So not only does my riding have a naturally aging population, but we are also experiencing an influx of seniors from the greater Toronto area, who have decided to retire to the beauty of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Consequently, I have a keen interest in legislation which may be of benefit to my seniors—a very small group of my seniors. But anyway, that is the problem with this bill: It benefits a very small segment of the over-65 population. The bill is designated to provide financial assistance to seniors who want to renovate their homes in order to make them more compatible with their aging lifestyle, thereby allowing them to stay in their homes for as long as possible. I can't argue with that; it sounds good.

However, the lofty goal is about as far as it goes. The legislation requires that a senior must spend at least \$10,000 on certain home renovations pertaining to mobility, functionality and accessibility, which are not covered by any other program. So the renovation cannot be designed in any way to enhance the value of the property or it would be disqualified. A senior spending \$10,000 on these types of renovations would receive a tax credit of \$1,500. Sounds like a good deal. There's only one problem: The median income for seniors in this province is \$25,000 for a single and \$45,000 for a couple. This is the income bracket for the majority of seniors in Ontario. That's just the way it is. So let's look at that. A widow making \$25,000 who wants to modify her home to make it wheelchair accessible so she can continue to live in it would have to fork over 40% of her annual income in order to qualify for this tax credit. That's pretty heavy. Are you kidding me? Who's going to be doing that?

I said earlier that my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock had a growing seniors population. In fact, the percentage of residents over the age of 65 is 46% higher in my riding than in Ontario as a whole. This is another bit of data from Statistics Canada that is equally interesting: The median household income in my riding is more than 12% below the provincial average. Consequently, a disproportionate percentage of my seniors are going to be at or around that \$25,000-a-year median income. Realistically, how big a deal is the healthy homes renovation tax credit going to be for the vast majority of seniors living in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock?

I haven't heard of any senior centres in Lindsay, Bobcaygeon or Fenelon Falls planning healthy homes renovation tax credit parties or festivals. None of the seniors' clubs in Haliburton or Beaverton or Peterborough county are organizing parades, street dances or fireworks to celebrate the passage of this bill. So when I sit down with the "old boys," if I can use that phrase, who gather every

morning at their local Tim Hortons, I can assure this House that the healthy homes renovation tax credit is not the primary topic of conversation. In fact, this bill is a non-event for most seniors in my riding.

0940

The seniors whom I deal with are more interested in how they're going to pay their hydro bills, the essential services they need in their lives. This past winter, many of them called my office for help in stopping OPG from disconnecting their electricity and plunging them into cold and darkness. Many seniors are struggling to pay their outrageous hydro bills, which this government has brought down on them like a plague. It is the number one issue in my constituency office, and I've said that time and time again. Once they scrape the money together to pay for their hydro, they're often left in a quandary in terms of buying food. God forbid that they would want to waste the little money they have left on buying a present for a grandchild. Has this government been listening to any of this? Because it certainly doesn't look like it to me.

Very few Liberal members represent rural or small-town ridings, and I truly believe that they have totally lost touch with what is going on across the province. The impact which the McGuinty government's green energy program has had on rural Ontario has been terrible; scandalous. People have to leave their homes; it's that serious. Citizens' groups have sprung up across the province to fight the continued proliferation of industrial wind turbines near schools and residential areas. Dozens of municipalities across Ontario have passed motions demanding that wind turbine projects not be approved since the government silenced them from the approval process. Homeowners, including many seniors, have seen the value of their properties go down as a result of the wind turbines and solar farms; that's not helping seniors. Yet, this government doesn't acknowledge any of that. We repeat it and repeat it, bring motions and bring private members' bills, and it just continues its relentless pursuit of green energy despite the human costs.

It reminds me of the Death Star in Star Wars wreaking havoc and destruction in its path as it makes its way relentlessly across the galaxy. However, when the good citizens of the Liberal-held ridings of Scarborough objected to a string of industrial wind turbines across the shores of Lake Ontario, the McGuinty government's ears perked up. The McGuinty government sure heard the voices of the seniors who live in those communities.

What this government has done to seniors and lower-income people across the province is nothing short of outrageous. They talk a good game, but their actions demonstrate they're really not interested in addressing the very real problems of seniors and low-income Ontarians.

The member from Hamilton Mountain has said many times in the House, and said again this morning, that they're not addressing the little things that keep seniors in their houses. Shovelling the walkways, more home care: That is what the seniors are screaming for. Bringing in a

piece of legislation like this will do absolutely nothing for the average senior in this province.

I have no doubt that the members for St. Paul's and Toronto Centre will have parks named after them by the grateful seniors of Forest Hill and Rosedale when they use their \$1,500 tax credits towards redecorating their condos in Fort Myers and Clearwater. This is a feel-good bill for them. It makes the Premier feel good while doing almost nothing for the people of this province who look to their leaders for help.

Last November, the PC caucus supported a private member's bill sponsored by the NDP which would have removed the provincial portion of the HST from home heating bills. That bill wasn't a panacea, but it was a definite step in the right direction. That is why my colleagues and I supported it during second reading, and it passed. Bill 4 passed second reading on November 24 and was referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

Maybe I was away, but I don't recall that bill ever being referred to committee yet. I don't think it has been—no?—let alone being brought back to this House for third reading. That bill would have benefited all seniors, not just the affluent seniors that the McGuinty government seems to be more concerned about. Where was the social conscience of the McGuinty government then? They really don't have one.

Seniors in this province don't need gimmicks like this bill; they need a resolution to their astronomical hydro rates and heating rates. They're having a crippling effect on them. They need the government to take a deep breath and rethink its disastrous green energy policies, which have hurt countless seniors, families and businesses across the province. The McGuinty government needs to get serious about fixing the growing problems in health care if it truly wants to help seniors. It needs to get its financial house in order, to bring government spending under control through such measures as a legislated, across-the-board public sector wage freeze. It needs to haul in the obscene waste of taxpayers' dollars through a string of scandals at such enterprises as Ornge, Samsung, the Mississauga power plant cancellation and the notorious eHealth boondoggle.

It needs to get serious about job creation by accepting PC policy reforms that would update outdated apprenticeship programs, which would generate thousands upon thousands of skilled tradesmen to fill much-needed voids in their economy. I could go on and on. It would be great if more of the young people could access it, but the ratios need to change so more can access it.

Fixing the finances of the province, getting serious about job creation and lowering corporate taxes to stimulate a reinvestment in research, innovation and hiring are the ways to help seniors and all hard-working people of Ontario, because they'd have more money to spend on health care and education. When the deficit bills and debt bills come in as the third-largest budget item, we are not able to help health care and education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, this has been a long debate on this bill, and here we are again, still debating it. It's a wonderful, feel-good, fuzzy-wuzzy-feeling bill. We will more than likely be supporting this. I know some of the seniors in my area will be very, very active in pursuing this bill, but overall, it won't be addressing the mass that we need.

I just wanted to make a comment on the member from Ottawa Centre, who clarified the point that my member said earlier, that they can spend up to \$10,000, and you're absolutely right. The bill doesn't require—if you spend \$2,000, you can get a credit on the \$2,000 that you're spending. You're absolutely right. But even the \$2,000—not many individuals have that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, folks, certainly the decibel level's going up, especially in that corner down there and a couple of sidebars over here. I cannot hear the member at the back. I would suggest, if you want to have a group session, you go outside. All right? That would be much appreciated.

Continue.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I just wanted to clarify that point: Not too many people have that \$10,000 to spend, or the \$2,000, let alone \$200. That's a reality that seniors are facing in this province.

The member from Pickering–Scarborough East, in her earlier debate, also talked about how this is going to be creating a wealth of jobs. It will, some, but it won't in the majority, because there won't be that many seniors that will be able to take advantage of this program. Let's face it: This is, again, a fuzzy-wuzzy, feel-good, lovey-dovey bill.

I want to comment on the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. You made a very good, eloquent point in regard to how this is going to benefit your area, and I feel a lot of what you have in your area in Algoma–Manitoulin.

Unfortunately, I didn't get to the point that I wanted to make in regard to—and I will make it the next time, Mr. Speaker, when the clock comes around the second time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to debate again today and talk about this Bill 2, the healthy homes renovation tax credit.

I had the opportunity to give a 20-minute presentation on this legislation a week ago, and I must say, my concerns are still the same. This is a piece of legislation that was the second-most important act by this government after it was elected. The first, of course, we know, is the ancient parliamentary right bill that is placed before the House; that stays on the order paper until it prorogues.

This bill was, obviously, the first piece of public policy that this government decided to put forward. They did it over 10 months ago, and 10 months later, here we are. It took us an unprecedented two weeks to put forward legislation, Bill 115, on a province-wide wage

freeze for educational professionals, and here we are, 10 months later, and what they will consider a signature piece of their financial plan for seniors still hasn't passed because they don't have the will to do it. It is more about public relations than it is about public policy.

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This is a very interesting trend—an unhelpful one, nonetheless—with this government. I think that it's important for those who are watching this debate at home to recognize that, whatever they're saying from the Liberal Party on this piece of legislation, it is not met with absolute conviction. Why? Because it took them 10 months to come to this point and arrive at this point to talk about a bill that they're not intending to pass.

Speaker, I'm pleased again to be able to support my Progressive Conservative colleagues in opposing this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The Minister of Energy.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of the Environment, sorry.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've been given some additional responsibility.

What—I won't say amazes me—surprises me a bit is the degree of negativity that we have toward a bill that I think is a very significant step forward in terms of providing services for seniors. I recognize that in the best of all worlds, when there's unlimited money available, you may want to expand programs of this kind.

I've been reading two books that my friend in the front benches of the NDP would be interested in: *Minding the Public Purse*, by the NDP Minister of Finance in Saskatchewan, and another by Thomas Walkom about the days of the NDP in the province of Ontario. There was a recognition at that time—I'll put it in the context of this bill—that there were major economic challenges. When governments want to move forward, when they have to take certain action, sometimes they have to do it in a more modest way than otherwise would be the case.

I hear particularly some of my friends, and the speaker whose remarks we are addressing, calling for more spending in this area. Yet during at least the first two thirds of question period, they were up demanding that the government spend less money. But when they get into debate in the morning—perhaps when not everybody is watching television—they're demanding that the government spend even more money and that it be an expanded program.

I think this is a significant step forward. I am flummoxed by the fact that the Legislature has not passed this bill rather quickly. But the opposition has chosen, as is their right, to take a long time in dealing with the bill, which they keep telling us is a relatively routine bill. So I'm looking forward to approval of this in the very near future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I think the analysis by the Minister of the Environment is fairly accurate. The good thing about what Liberals are saying today that they weren't saying four or five years ago with their bills—with their bills, they used to say, "This is historic," as if it were really revolutionary. They're not saying that anymore about the picayune little bills that they introduce. So at least they now talk modestly about measures that might help some people.

I have to admit that the analysis of the Tories is quite correct, because it's similar to ours, except the answers to these questions are radically different, as you might imagine.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh. I can't get over that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Ottawa-Nepean would agree with that, I'm assuming.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No? Because the Tories say we are not doing very much for seniors—and they're quite right—and presumably that they have the right position on seniors. Yet if you look historically at what her previous regime did, they decimated the Ontario population, both young and old. They cut \$13 billion of corporate taxes, thus reducing our province to so very little that we had nothing for seniors, nothing for children, nothing for anyone. In fact, in a great economy, they left us with a \$5-billion deficit. So the Tories have little to teach us by way of what we can learn from the past. This is true.

This is a little bill, and it will benefit a few people. We argue about 1% of the population will benefit, and these are the one-percenters, the very, very wealthy. I know the Minister of the Environment may not like that part of it. I suspect he—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But he's right. It will help some people, and we should get on with it; it doesn't do very much for the majority of seniors.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has two minutes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the input from my colleagues from all sides. I think that as people get older, the last thing they want to do is be dependent on their families or their government. The McGuinty government has made such a mess of the economy that their families are hurting also and, may I say, the hydro bills, the home heating bills—the cost of living is going through the roof. So their families are struggling with the fact that when their seniors, their parents or grandparents, can't stay in their own homes because of bad policy, the high cost of living, high energy, high heat, they have to struggle even to help them. Does that help the seniors population stay in dignity, help them stay in their own homes a little longer if they could afford to? It doesn't.

You see a piece of legislation brought in that helps such a minuscule number of seniors, when the government could change the approach of how they help seniors

in a more holistic way of more home care services. They can do that all within the ministries' budgets that they do have. They need to reallocate. There is tons of wasteful spending within these ministries. So let's step back and say, how do we really help seniors stay at home?

This piece of legislation, the healthy homes renovation tax credit—well, as my colleague from Oxford said, it might be healthy for the home but it's really not helping the senior stay within the home. So we aren't giving constructive criticism, saying, "Nice title"—it helps a very small group of seniors. I gave the statistics from my riding of how few seniors are going to be helped. Let's get to some real meat of the matter in trying to help the seniors stay at home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It's a pleasure to rise this morning to comment on Bill 2, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 to implement a healthy homes renovation tax credit. As some of my colleagues have noted, this legislation has been with us for some time now. It has returned from committee, much like we recently came back to the Legislature from the House summer hiatus, and, as in that case, you're tempted to say, "Look at you. You've hardly changed a bit."

As viewers will know, there isn't as much of a crackle in the air about Bill 2 as there was when the House was called back earlier; there's not much in the way of electricity in the air, maybe because this bill was introduced nearly 10 months ago and we're only now getting around to third reading. Project overrun, I guess; it happens.

It's hard to find skilled tradespeople when they keep leaving the province for opportunity in other jurisdictions. In any event, here we are again debating the healthy homes renovation tax credit, a bill that proposes to allow seniors to claim a refundable tax credit of up to \$1,500 for expenses related to permanent modifications to their homes: the kind of changes that would make it easier to live in their place; the kind of changes, if I understand the legislation correctly, that would improve their home without adding value to it; the kind of changes that presumably the next homeowners won't see as a value added; the kind of features they might even pay a contra to remove.

I understand that this kind of behaviour is intended to avoid government subsidizing things like hot tubs, saunas and pools, but the wording still strikes me as a little strange. To recap, Bill 2 would offer a 15% rebate on home renovations up to \$10,000. You would still have to pay the HST, of course, and you would have to wait until the tax cycle to recover your credit. But you would be in line to receive anywhere from \$1 on a \$50 home renovation, to \$200 on a \$10,000 home renovation.

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Like many members on this side of the House, I have my doubts about the number of seniors with a spare \$10,000 kicking around to take advantage of an offer like this. In my constituency office, seniors aren't calling up, asking why the government won't make it easier for them

to install grip bars in their bathroom; they're coming in and calling around with much more pressing and serious concerns. They often end up at the end of their rope, and when they call up their elected representative, it is because they are at their last resort. These are people who are discouraged, distraught and desperate, people struggling to retain their dignity as they plead for help.

What does Bill 2 do for them? How does it help them live a better life in the house they chose to spend their golden years in? It really doesn't. We're now seeing seniors forced by cruel circumstances into working long into what are supposed to be the retirement years. People joke about Freedom 75, but nobody is really laughing. They're choking back tears and anger.

The vast majority of seniors can't afford a \$10,000 renovation, and those that can don't need the modest tax credit that this bill is offering. It's smoke and mirrors. The truth is, really, that most Ontarian seniors are making choices between which bills get paid this month. They're scrambling to pay monstrous hydro bills and struggling to understand why their heating bill has doubled since 2003. They're justifiably shocked to hear about the gold-plated FIT energy rates. They're simply appalled at the \$190-million bill for the cancellation of the Mississauga power plant. They are connecting the dots.

They're wrestling with medical expenses and pharmacy costs. If the government really wanted to help Ontario's seniors and had the political will to strap together a \$60-million short-term money allocation, we could do much better than Bill 2.

Some three quarters of the seniors in this province see their hydro bills as unaffordable, so I don't quite understand how those same seniors can dig under the couch cushions to find money for a substantial home renovation. Where are you going to find the \$10,000 that you have to borrow? Where is the sense in expecting people to borrow \$10,000 to foot the cost of a home renovation when those same people can barely pay their bills?

Most people look at Bill 2 and are saddened by the sobering reality that after helping to raise this province to greatness, mind you, they are left in a situation where they are unable to spend \$10,000 on their home. They simply don't have that type of disposable income. It boils down to this: Wealthier seniors will do renovations whether we incent them or not. Poor ones have more pressing concerns than walk-in tubs or chair lifts.

This is a very modest, very slender bill that benefits at best a sliver of the population. We've heard about 380,000 people aged 65-plus that this bill is supposedly going to help, but this government's own stats show around 1.89 million Ontarians aged 65 or over, so 80% of seniors are being left out in the cold with this bill.

Bill 2 was the chalk outline of a good intention, so on the whole, I'm not really sure how much merit to attach to it. This is mainly a window-dressing bill for the Liberals. Like the tuition reduction for post-secondary students, it speaks to a personality tic, a well-documented history of picking and choosing small-target demographics for political reasons.

I'm not really sure what the government is up to by bringing it forward, especially the way that it has. This has gone to committee and returned for third reading. Then, rather than promptly put it to a vote, they decide to make it a bit player in the by-election drama. It has been taking up space on the stage here so that the minority government can avoid the business at hand, the responsibility of the minority government of seriously working with the members of this side of the House, using our best ideas to improve this province.

This is another piece of legislation that is constructed not out of caring but out of calculation. It's designed to do a great deal of good for the optics and interests of the Liberals. This isn't about helping seniors live in their homes longer; it is about doing what helps to make the party opposite hold on to that side of the House a while longer.

What I'm hearing from Ontarians is that there is indeed a growing appetite for renovation. We've heard the government say that the program costs for the tax credit would be offset in other areas, and when we hear that the costs for this initiative will be carried by others, what we're hearing is the story of the opportunity costs.

What would we be able to do with our time here as legislators, with our resources as provincial government, if we weren't dealing with this foot-dragging filibuster? What if we actually addressed the kind of pocketbook concerns that have a real, immediate, cumulative and on-going effect on the health, welfare and quality of life of seniors in Ontario?

What if, instead of the PR-centric Bill 2, this government had sped Bill 4 through committee and back to third reading? If the government considered seniors' concerns to be truly a priority, it could see Bill 4, the HST rebate for home heating, stickhandled through the House and into law by Thanksgiving. They could sort out the committees, sending it back out into the House for third reading, and do some good for Ontario seniors before the sub-zero temperatures set in.

We have already had some cold nights this week, and furnaces will come on again. The radiators will be warming up here at Queen's Park, and the hydro bills in Ontario mailboxes will send chills down spines. Instead, that bill will probably celebrate its first anniversary, its first birthday, stalled out in committee, yet it was introduced the same day as Bill 2.

We should really be debating and approving a plan that would acknowledge the 600,000 men and women who are unemployed in this province and adopt measures that would create the kind of environment in which jobs would flourish, the kind of Ontario where there is work for all who want to work, the kind of Ontario that has opportunities for all Ontarians in an Ontario that delivers on its promises.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Bill 2 should have passed a long time ago. This is something that we're going to move forward with that will assist some. It should have

been done a long time ago. We should have been moving on to the greater things that our seniors need.

I don't know what you're hearing at the doors, but this is what I'm hearing at the doors: It's desperation. Our seniors really want to have the assistance in their homes. They want to have their care in their homes so they can stay in their homes. They want to have assistance to get the shovelling done. They want to have assistance with mobility in order to get to the grocery store so they don't have to get caught up and moved into a home.

This is what people are really looking for. This is what our seniors are asking for. This bill needs to move forward. Push it, let's get it done, and let's move on with the real important issues where we can really start moving with our seniors.

I would suggest to this government to actually consider what our neighbouring province is doing. Quebec has a program that provides assistance to low-income seniors aged 65 and over who need to make minor adaptations to their homes or apartments in order to continue to live in their homes. This program does not limit itself to 15% of the cost but, rather, provides the full reimbursement up to a full cost of \$3,500. This is something that could work here.

If we want to put meat to this bill, this—let's get this one out of the way. Hopefully it will move, and some of our seniors will benefit from it. But it will certainly not address the needs of the seniors in Algoma-Manitoulin who have been questioning me at the door: "What is our government doing for me today to assist me so I can live in my home?"

Let's move this thing forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you to the member from Burlington for her comments. Bill 2 is, in fact, a good bill and it will help a number of seniors in the province of Ontario remain in their homes. It will help them financially. You do not have to spend \$10,000 to be eligible for the credit. You can spend a maximum of \$10,000 in every year and get 15% back on that, just to clear that up.

Speaker, part of the discussion that's taking place here today when it comes to this particular bill is framing this particular piece of legislation as if it is the only thing that our government has done for seniors since coming into government in 2003. I want to quickly, in the short time that I have, run down some of those other things that we've done since 2003: enhancements to the energy and property tax credit for seniors, providing a credit maximum of up to \$1,025 annually; personal income tax cuts—93% of payers in the province now pay less—about \$200 annual savings.

The Ontario sales tax credit: The new permanent tax credit provides an annual payment of up to \$260 for every senior in addition to the existing GST credit.

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Seniors in the north: This was worked on very hard by our Liberal northern caucus. Northern residents who pay rent or property tax for their principal residence are

eligible for an annual credit of up to \$130 if you're a single person, up to \$200 for a family.

The Ontario senior homeowners' property tax credit doubled to \$500 in 2010, announced in our 2008 budget. The government is providing about \$1 billion. We've increased access to their locked-in accounts; income splitting for seniors. Additionally, seniors: 10% off your electricity bill for the next five years. It's called the Ontario clean energy benefit, available to everybody in the entire province of Ontario.

So, far beyond just Bill 2, there's a whole long list of things that we've done for seniors in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise to speak about this bill. I hear the members from the NDP wanting this bill pushed through, that we've got to hurry up and get it going. But the reason it wasn't pushed through is because this government is more interested in destroying industry than creating it, and I point to the horse racing industry, where they just got rid of 30,000 jobs. They moved on that at lightning speed. I can understand why they didn't bring this bill. They would rather move in that direction.

It was pointed out by members opposite that there's a 10% credit on paying—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Folks, I'd like to remind the official opposition that their member is standing up and trying to say something, and I've got two people who are louder than him. Maybe you want to show some respect to your fellow colleague by keeping it down a bit. And I'd ask the decibel level to go down over here. It seems to be a problem area right now.

Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker.

The government has pointed out that there's a 10% reduction in hydro rates that they got through a previous time. But their hydro rates have gone up some 40%, so it doesn't make any sense here. It hasn't had the effect that this government certainly had hoped it would make.

With their failed Green Energy Act and putting people out of work in the horse racing industry, you can understand—it's interesting why they wouldn't want to push this bill ahead a little sooner. But they're too interested in doing that. They have no job creation legislation. Industry is leaving this province in record levels.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, last warning.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm always pleased to rise and talk about any bill that's come before this House. Sometimes things take a lot longer than they should, but we have to respect the process and debate it out and have

discussions about it. We're here in this Legislature to get results for Ontarians, so I hope that bills don't drag out this long on other items that are very crucial, and seniors are a very crucial part of my community of London-Fanshawe. I know that some—and we've said this repeatedly—of our seniors in my community will benefit from this. But I think when you look at this bill, the seniors that will be able to get the full effect from this are those who have \$10,000 to spend, to get at least a \$1,500 rebate.

But seniors are also—their lifestyle encompasses, of course, money. Income is a major focus of everyone when you're surviving day to day, trying to make ends meet at home. But for seniors also, there are segments of that that we're not thinking of when we look at this bill, and that's things that keep you in your home day to day.

Sometimes seniors are older and they can't do their laundry. The laundry is very heavy, or they can't bend down to pick up their laundry; or, as my colleague from Hamilton Mountain said, shovel the snow, cut the grass. This year we've had drought and it's been extremely hot. I don't see any seniors going out to cut the grass. It's a shame this bill doesn't incorporate that part of a senior's lifestyle, to keep them in their homes. It has to be two-parts: income, in order to make sure that physically they can remain in their home, or apartment for that matter—that's been one that's kind of been of this bill—and the other part being the day-to-day, everyday life chores that seniors physically can't do, that they need help with.

So I'd like to pass this bill and move on to the next item that's crucial to other Ontarians. I certainly understand the seriousness of it, but we do need to get on with that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Burlington has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: In my earlier segment, I mentioned the cruel joke of Freedom 75. I should say that seniors, some of whom are still working, obviously, are as worried about the economy as anyone. They are worried about it for themselves and for their families, their friends, their communities, their children and their grandchildren. They're watching as their grandchildren emerge from university or college to an unemployment wasteland.

They're starting to do the math and realizing that this government has presided over an economy that has now gone well over five years with an unemployment rate above the national average. The Ontario that they grew up with has changed in some very profound and disappointing ways. They invested their lives here; they invested their love here. And this government has let them down: billion-dollar boondoggles like Ornge and eHealth, cynical electioneering—these examples are too numerous to list—preaching transparency but religiously evading accountability, as it has on the cost of the power plant cancellation in Mississauga and Oakville. Again—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I would suggest to the member from Burlington that she stick to the issue. You're drifting. Okay? We're

talking about a bill; we're not talking about those other things.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Again, if we're here talking about seniors staying at home, if we're talking about a tax credit that will make their lives easier, the government could do a lot of good by warming up to legislation like the HST rebate for home heating bill—real relief. Until we see a day like that, the Ontario PC caucus has misgivings about the government's claims that care and relief for seniors is much of a priority for them.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being past 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to recognize the members of the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors who are with us in the Speaker's gallery today, including their chair, Craig Richardson. I hope all members will take the time to, first of all, read the economic impact study that they presented today at Queen's Park for us to read as to what they do in our economy; and secondly, to attend their reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230 to learn more about this very important industry to the economy of Ontario.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would also like to recognize the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors and specifically an old sparring partner of mine, Tom Kane.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure, in the members' east gallery, to introduce to the Legislative Assembly Maisie Robinson.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Lloyd and Mary Lou Lichti from Stratford; Rick O'Donnell; his wife, Angela Huang; his mother, Verna O'Donnell; and his aunt, Velma McKellar, all from Mitchell. Welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a series of guests to introduce. They will be making their way in. It's Bill Jeffery, the national coordinator for the Center for Science in the Public Interest; Dr. Mary L'Abbé, who is the chair of the department of nutritional sciences, faculty of medicine, at the University of Toronto; Megan Ogilvie, who is from the Toronto Star, author of Menu Confidential; Dr. David Hammond from the School of Public Health and Health Systems at the University of Waterloo; Heather Manson, the chief of health promotion, chronic disease and injury prevention at Public Health Ontario; Mrs. Patricia Hughes, executive director of the Law Commission of Ontario; Mrs. Judi Farrell, executive director of Hypertension Canada; and Dr. Doug Weir—well known to us—president of the Ontario Medical Association.

I also have Dr. Bryan Bollinger from the school of business at New York City University, and Christina Huang, who is from Santa Monica. They're all here at Queen's Park in rooms 228 and 230, talking about Writ-

ing on the Wall, for putting calorie labelling on menus. They will be making their way in, but they invite everybody to drop in at lunchtime in rooms 228 and 230.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm delighted this morning—Rocco Forgione, who is the father of my legislative assistant, Andrew, will be joining us in the Legislature today to watch the proceedings. I would like to welcome him to the Legislature.

LEGISLATIVE INTERNS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Monday, I made a mistake. Today, I correct it.

We have with me in the Speaker's gallery today the new team of the Ontario legislative interns. Please join me in warmly welcoming Simmerpreet Anand, Connor Bays, Anthony Boland, Joshua Borden, Elizabeth Elder, Andrea Ernesaks, Gillian Hanson, Leanna Katz, Hibah Sidat and Lauren Tarasuk. Welcome to Queen's Park, and good luck.

As I did have an opportunity to meet the interns: They're hiring you; you're not hiring them, so behave yourselves. Thank you for joining us, and thank you for the help that you provide through this program to all of our members.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier this morning. Premier, a few weeks ago when you were pretending to get tough on one sector of the public service, you put the rest on notice, or so you claimed. "We're coming," you warned, when speaking about an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. But despite your assurances, the only thing that's coming is an MPAC convention for its 1,500 or so government employees today in Toronto. You can't talk about fiscal responsibility out of one side of your mouth and at the same time allow your employees to organize a convention right smack in the middle of the Toronto International Film Festival, when hotel and convention space are at a premium.

Why, when faced with Ontario's debt and deficit, did you allow this extravagant convention to move forward? When are you finally going to put your money, so to speak, where your mouth is and actually take responsibility for the costs your government keeps incurring?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have no authority over the decisions of MPAC, which is municipally operated.

Let me say to the member opposite that I concur. I thought it was kind of a boneheaded thing to do. I don't understand it. It's not a good use of money. I'm arranging to speak to the Chair—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members on all sides, let's bring the tone down, please.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I will be speaking to the Chair. Unfortunately, we have no power of directive over them. They are controlled by the municipalities of Ontario in a structure that was set up by your government. But again, I concur with you. I thought it was inappropriate, a terrible use of money, absolutely the wrong thing to do, and I'd ask them not to do it again. I don't know how we can retrieve that sort of thing, but we find it as unacceptable as you do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, the MPAC convention is not just your average gathering of employees. I wish that it were so. This is a convention where government employees will be wined and dined, the event catered by a vendor who boasts that they've served the likes of Oprah, Elizabeth Taylor and Karl Lagerfeld. How very TIFF of you, Premier.

In addition to covering the costs of extravagant catering, taxpayers are on the hook for the better part of \$1 million so that government employees can play team-building Lego games and perhaps do a little stargazing while they're at it. MPAC people, by the way, received an 8% pay hike in contract settlements early this year.

Premier, this is not just wasteful spending; frankly, it's offensive. You've been trying to convince us that you've found religion when it comes to reckless spending, but clearly that conversion has not yet taken place. What is the explanation for this latest Liberal spending scandal?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I just remind the member opposite that MPAC is not a provincial agency; it's a municipal agency. I just remind him—let me remind him. I concur. It's an inappropriate use of municipal tax dollars. I completely concur with that. There is a 15-member board, of which there are two provincial representatives. The Chair is chosen by the municipal employees.

Let me stress: I think it's an inappropriate use of money, I concur entirely with the official opposition; I was quite astounded when I heard about it and I think it's an inappropriate use of municipal money. I concur, and I'm glad we've had an opportunity to discuss this in the context of broader restraint that we are—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm glad that the minister concurs. We have listened to your assurances, but the facts speak for themselves.

The government is not scoring any points when it comes to oversight and management. This week's frivolous MPAC convention is not the first and not the only example of government mismanagement. EHealth, the Windsor Energy Centre more recently and, much more disturbingly, Ornge are all scandals that Ontario couldn't and cannot afford. At best, these are examples of a shameful waste of taxpayer money. At worst, they endangered the health, indeed, the lives of Ontario residents.

Ontarians cannot afford any more scandals, any more frivolous government conventions and any more platitudes. When will your government finally start doing your job and commit to protecting Ontario taxpayers, rather than abusing their trust?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have in fact laid out a plan. I'll be reporting public accounts tomorrow morning in terms of achievements to date. I concur with the opposition about this particular circumstance.

I'd also remind the opposition that the PC Party promised to put their expenses for meals, hospitality and other things all online. That was 2010, Mr. Speaker. They never have. They have not put the expenses for their leader's office. I concur on MPAC. I would simply ask you to quit hiding your meals, your hospitality, your leader's travels. I hope he's not expensing his fishing licence anymore.

But thank you for raising MPAC. I agree: absolutely inappropriate use of municipal tax dollars.

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is for the Premier. The Liberal government just doesn't get it. They can't wrap their heads around the fact that their reckless overspending has Ontario headed down a path to economic and financial ruin. The scandal and waste we've seen for nine years continues unabated. Despite 57,000 Ontarians losing their jobs last month, fat-cat bureaucrats, your bureaucrats in the Liberal government, continue to feast at the taxpayer trough. Hundreds of thousands of dollars—that's the price tag for a ritzy two-and-a-half-hour bureaucratic Lego party.

Will the Premier step aside and let the PC caucus clean up his mess and return Ontario to economic and fiscal health?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, I concur. I think it's an inappropriate use of money. The board needs to deal with that. Unfortunately, the government of Ontario can't impact it. It's a municipal board; it is controlled by municipalities.

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, MPAC—that's right, my colleague reminds me—Municipal Property Assessment Corp. I concur: It's a horrible use of municipal taxpayers' money.

And I would ask the member, will you ask your leader to now start posting his hidden expenses so people can see how much he's spending on meals and on travel, so we can see if he's still expensing his fishing licence or if he is still expensing his Chicken McNuggets?

I concur: The MPAC boondoggle is unacceptable to taxpayers and unacceptable to this government. Unfortunately, we don't have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I'm going to take this moment to remind the gov-

ernment side that when answering questions, it is to actually answer questions about government policy and issues. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you, Speaker, and back to the Premier: The public service is laughing at you. They're laughing in your face. You've known about this for months and you've done nothing. You continue to pass the buck.

Bureaucrats thought it was entirely responsible to rent the Toronto centre for the arts at a cost of \$200,000. Why? To play with Lego. Apparently they also felt it was reasonable to wine and dine themselves like Cleopatra herself—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can't hear the question, opposition members.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Like moths to a flame, the Liberals' bloated and greedy government can't say no to ripping off taxpayers every chance it gets. The Premier talks tough but is clearly a pushover, a paper tiger, someone the civil service has no problem defying.

When will the Liberal government get a grip, say enough is enough and put an end to its nine years of waste, scandal and corruption?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, MPAC is a municipally run operation. There is no provincial tax money in that. They are independent of the government of Ontario.

We concur with the official opposition that this was not an appropriate use of municipal tax money. We find it unacceptable. We are continuing to reduce our deficit, to get back to balance.

I'll be reporting out public accounts tomorrow, which I believe will reflect some of the challenges that still remain for us but will also show some of the progress we have been able to achieve working together, moving this province forward together, as we eliminate the deficit and continue to make important investments in health and education, which are essential to a brighter and better economic future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Just to be clear, it's this government that appoints their cronies to run these agencies, boards and commissions.

The McGuinty Liberals have lost complete touch with reality. They feel entitled to their entitlements. Sadly, these entitlements always come at the taxpayers' expense. Some 57,000 Ontarians lost their job last month, and this McGuinty Liberal government is busy playing with Lego and dining with movie stars.

The chair of MPAC justified this shameful spending, much like Minister Matthews justifies the \$2.4 billion she poured down the drain at eHealth and Minister Bentley justifies his squandering of at least half a billion dollars on cancelled power plants.

Does the Premier acknowledge that this government's spending is out of control, and will he fire every person responsible, including the chair of MPAC, for yet another spending scandal, more scandal that has occurred—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It is important that we get back to balance. It is important to have full transparency and accountability in expenditures. I believe that this was an inappropriate use of municipal tax dollars. I don't concur with those who think this is a good use of money. If I were with AMO I would be absolutely outraged.

But I also think it's important for the opposition to start putting their expenses online. They said in 2010 they would do that as part of increased transparency and accountability. So while they get up on their hind legs and want accountability here—and they're right to want that—I think taxpayers want to know how much they are spending and what they're spending it on. I've got a whole list of very interesting things that have some historic connection to the now Leader of the Opposition, which we'll be happy to talk about more.

But yes, the MPAC decision was a bad use of municipal tax dollars—no provincial money in it. We do not have the ability to run the day-to-day operations. I've expressed my concerns to the board and will continue to do so. I hope AMO will take them to task for this most unfortunate use of public money.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. This morning the finance minister was in the papers insisting that we can expect more legislation, exactly the same kind of simplistic, unconstitutional legislation that the Premier has been warning against not so long ago. I want to know why the Premier is prepared to move ahead with a plan that he's admitted many times isn't working.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate my honourable colleague's interest in the next initiative we'd like to move ahead with, but I would encourage her to wait for the details before she attacks it. That will allow her to come to understand exactly what we want to do and how we want to do it.

But I can say at the highest level that, in keeping with the pronouncements that we made in our budget some six months ago, we think it's important to understand that we're all in this together. I speak to the broader public sector, all of us who have the privilege of working for Ontarians through the public sector, and we all have to find a way to be part of the solution. We want to do that in a way that is respectful of our collective agreements and the collective bargaining process, but we also want to be respectful of the taxpayers and their demands of us that we find a way to continue to protect health care and education as priority services.

So I encourage my honourable colleague to wait for the details. I'd be very interested in having her support, of course, as we move forward with that initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Allow me to remind the Premier: Mere weeks ago the government denounced a Conservative plan for an "unconstitutional wage scheme" that would "cost families billions." I just want to know when the Premier changed his mind.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my honourable colleague—and I can appreciate that she is eager; if nothing else, she is eager. I would ask her to wait for some of the details and she will see that our initiative will indeed be respectful of the collective bargaining process and also of collective agreements. So I would encourage her to wait for the details, and obviously we would appreciate her support as we move forward together on behalf of the good people of Ontario to both tackle the deficit and protect those important public services that families have to count on.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People want a government that focuses on their challenges. Instead, they see a Premier who's plowing ahead with a plan that he has admitted himself will not work, a plan that's causing turmoil in the classroom as we speak, a plan that will cost more in the long run to the good people of this province, a plan that his own MPPs are scrambling to distance themselves from, a plan his own cabinet is raising serious concerns about.

Is the Premier ready to stop playing politics and start focusing on a plan that will actually get real results for the people of this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I say to my honourable colleague, I think we've got a lot of common ground when it comes to finding ways to both protect and improve the quality of our public services like health care and education, but where we part company is on the honourable leader of the third party's refusal to acknowledge that we need to do something about the deficit. We need to tackle that in a thoughtful and responsible way. As I've been saying lately, we owe our children more than just a great quality education; we owe them a strong economy that creates good jobs for them.

So, we need to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. We need to protect health care and we need to protect education, but we are also called upon to introduce some measures that show some restraint. If more than half the money that we spend as a government goes into compensation, I think we understand we have to do something about compensation. In particular, we've got to freeze it for a couple of years. That's our approach, Speaker, and that's where I part company with my honourable colleague.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Unfortunately, the people of Ontario keep seeing the same pattern from this government: short-term

decisions that are more about politics than they are about people, and long-term costs that are being hidden from the public until they get stuck with a huge bill.

Does the Premier have faith in the public, or is he just concerned that if they actually knew the facts, his job would be at risk?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we're making decisions—some of those are popular, some of those are less popular. My honourable colleague says we're playing politics. Dealing with the ONTC matter is not an easy political issue, and it's not one that's designed to make us popular. Dealing with horse racing in Ontario is not an easy political issue. The principal purpose of that is not to make us popular. Dealing with teacher pay is not an easy political issue. The purpose of that is certainly not, initially, to make us more popular.

What I'm saying to my honourable colleague is that leadership has something to do with making decisions—some of those decisions are difficult, some of them will be necessarily unpopular, but that's what leadership is fundamentally all about. So I'd invite my honourable colleague to acknowledge that at some point in time, stop finding parades in which she can jump in the front of and understand you've got to make some difficult decisions if you want to lead.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think it was the Tory bus that they jumped on recently, Speaker, never mind a parade.

Nonetheless, last month the Premier passed a very simplistic bill—a very simplistic bill—that affects our schools, but never mentioned once the Supreme Court challenge that's sure to follow. He promised peace and stability in schools but, instead, he has brought turmoil to the classroom.

Now we've seen it with cancelled power plants that cost millions. We've seen it with the mess at Ornge. Why should the people believe that this government is interested in putting people first when time and again they put themselves first and leave people paying the hefty bill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, my honourable colleague believes that we should continue to subsidize ONTC at \$400 per passenger. She believes that we should continue to subsidize horse racing at a cost of \$345 million on an annual basis. She thinks that we should give teachers an increase in pay. She thinks that we should give doctors an increase in pay. She thinks that we should give everybody in the broader public sector an increase in pay.

In an ideal world, we'd be able to support all those things, but we don't live in an ideal world. We live in this one, and our world has changed somewhat dramatically. We went through a very difficult recession. We're now carrying a significant deficit. Our rate of economic growth is somewhat slow. There's an 8% unemployment rate. So we've got to make some difficult decisions. We

can't fund everything in the same way that we did in the past, so we've got to make some choices.

We're saying on behalf of Ontario families: We're going to protect your schools and we're going to protect health care. We're going to eliminate the deficit as a foundation for a stronger economy. That's what we need to do, Speaker, and that's what we will do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Unfortunately, Speaker, what the people see are choices that the Liberals make to take care of their own political interests first and foremost.

The Premier insists that his plan is working, but the people who make this province work every day are left with real serious doubts. They see turmoil in the schools. They see the highest electricity bills in the country, which they pay every month. The highest electricity bills in the country are paid by Ontarians. They see a job strategy that simply isn't working, as hundreds of thousands of Ontarians remain without a job.

When is the Premier going to stop playing the same old political games and start working on a real plan to make life better for the people who pay the bills and make Ontario work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would be delighted to see some specifics of my honourable colleague's plan to eliminate the Ontario deficit. I'd love to see some specifics, but I'm not going to hold my breath.

My honourable colleague raised the issue of turmoil in our schools. I would make to my honourable colleague the same invitation that I've extended to Ontario teachers. I know that we have entered into a rough patch when it comes to our relationship with Ontario teachers—some Ontario teachers. But I think we owe it to ourselves, as responsible adults, to keep finding a way forward, to keep working hard to re-establish a positive, constructive relationship in the way that has worked so well for kids.

I think we need to leave the students out of this. I think we need to find a way, teachers and government, to work together. We've enjoyed so much success during the past nine years on behalf of our students. Let's find a way to re-establish that relationship going forward.

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, MPAC, a provincial agency answerable directly to you, is presently in the process of blowing hundreds of thousands of dollars on an extravagant Lego party. Not only are the MPAC bureaucrats gathering in Toronto during the Toronto International Film Festival—the most expensive time possible—but they're being treated to high-end catering, entertainment and luxurious accommodations. The bureaucrats at MPAC must not be paying attention. They clearly didn't get the minister's memo about the debt crisis he created in the province of Ontario.

Ontario is on the verge of financial collapse, but the McGuinty Liberals just can't stop spending. Can the

minister inform the House if he will be demanding that MPAC recoup the costs of its high-priced Lego party, or will the taxpayers foot the bill once again?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, there is no directive power for the minister or for the government. It is a municipal corporation. I concur with the official opposition: I think this is a very inappropriate use of municipal tax dollars.

We laid out a budget that, in fact, reduced expenditures. We have brought the rate of growth in expenditures lower. That party voted against every one of those initiatives. They voted against lowering expenses across a variety—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would invite the member to look at the addendum to the budget, which detailed, line by line, where those expenditures were coming out. That is an important process.

With respect to MPAC, unfortunately, this is not a government agency, as you have suggested. It is in fact controlled by municipalities. It is municipal tax dollars. I do concur that this is an inappropriate use of tax dollars, and I would invite the board and municipalities to explain to taxpayers how they will recoup that money.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, you can spin this any way you want. You can dodge and duck any way you want. But you directly appoint all members of that board. Dodge and duck and try to avoid your responsibility here, but Minister, I say to you, you haven't got a Lego to stand on.

The Liberals' long-established legacy of waste and scandal continues unabated. In 2010, the Auditor General found that MPAC had spent \$50 million over five years on goods and services, without supporting documentation. It turns out it was tailor-made golf clubs and gift cards and all kind of shenanigans. We now know they didn't bother to get a receipt: 200 grand to rent a theatre, thousands of dollars on swanky catering, travel and accommodations—no wonder they don't want a paper trail.

I ask you, Minister, will you admit that you have lost control of Ontario's finances and fire every person responsible for this gross misuse of public funds?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

1100

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, they wanted to fire everybody at the Ministry of Health. Now they want to fire everybody at MPAC. It's just a growing air of desperation.

With respect to the Auditor General's recommendations from 2010, all of them have been acted on and implemented.

I concur—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey, come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the context of the economy today, I was as shocked and disappointed as the opposition was with what I consider to be—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —a very inappropriate use of municipal tax dollars.

I look forward to working with all members of this House as we move back to balance to make sure that things like this don't happen again. I'll be speaking with the two of 15 members of the board who are provincial appointees.

I concur completely. It was a very inappropriate use of money. It really does do harm to a good thing like Lego, which I think that member plays with a lot. I have to concur with his anger and upset at this. I think it was very inappropriate, and I thank you for giving expression to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, the government of Quebec confirmed that it will not refurbish the aging Gently nuclear plant. It says that refurbishing the plant is too expensive and hinders the shift to cleaner, safer renewable power. Why is the government of Ontario blindly proceeding with plans to refurbish the similarly outdated Darlington nuclear power plant before it even knows what it will cost?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Interesting: Yesterday, the Atikokan facility in northwestern Ontario burned its last bit of coal. We're getting out of coal by the end of 2014. We're not putting it on standby like the NDP would; we're getting out of coal.

Nuclear has long been a clean fuel that happens, in the province of Ontario, to contribute to the employment of 70,000 people. The Darlington facility, which the NDP commissioned, happens to be one of the most efficient and effective nuclear facilities in the world. It makes sense to refurbish it so it can continue to contribute to our energy output—a stable, clean supply for decades to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The minister is nothing if not a great deflector. You do not know the cost of this. Quebec joins a growing list of jurisdictions around the world that are phasing out nuclear power because of growing safety concerns and rising costs: Belgium, Italy, Germany, Sweden and likely even Japan today.

Before deciding to proceed with the Darlington refurbishment, will the minister at least reveal to the people of Ontario the exact cost of this project and then allow a full consideration of cost-effective alternatives?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We'll always do what's in the best interests of the people of the province of

Ontario. Nuclear has been a strong part of our energy supply, supporting 70,000-plus people in the province of Ontario. To those 70,000 people and families, the NDP says, “No, you’re out of a job.” To the clean energy that comes from nuclear power, the NDP says, “No, we’d rather have coal on standby.”

It’s great to be against everything. They didn’t like the feed-in-tariff program. They don’t like private entrepreneurs bringing on clean, green electricity. They don’t like nuclear. They don’t like the jobs. One of these days, they’re going to tell us what they really do like.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Although I regularly ask the minister about health care issues in my western Mississauga neighbourhoods of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, today I’d like to ask her a question on behalf of Ontarians in the Northumberland area.

Our hospitals face many different pressures, some of which they have control over and some of which they do not. One such case of unplanned costs concerns recent outbreaks at Northumberland Hills Hospital. The hospital must deal with difficulties funding the \$100,000 associated with these outbreaks.

Minister, what can we do to make sure hospitals like Northumberland Hills are in a position to effectively respond to outbreaks, while ensuring they have the necessary funds to provide excellent patient care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member from Mississauga—Streetsville for this very important question.

I want to underline that patient safety is the number one focus in our hospitals. Providing high-quality care is their commitment to their patients. We know that if you track it, you can report it, and if you report it, you can improve it, and that’s exactly what we’re seeing when it comes to outbreaks in hospitals such as Northumberland Hills.

Northumberland Hills Hospital is a vital part of that community, and we’ve increased funding by \$12 million since 2003. This year, they’re receiving \$38.3 million. While sustaining funding for hospitals is important, we are also making the decision that we must now invest outside of those hospital walls—hold hospital budgets in line so we can invest more in community care.

We are seeing demonstrated results from this strategic decision. I’m proud to say that the CCAC in that area supports 53,000 people—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, hospitals like Northumberland Hills need to benefit from Ontario’s commitment to improved patient safety and accountability. This hospital is working with the Central East Local Health Integration Network to improve patient safety. We appreciate the efforts of all of the front-line staff who work so hard from day to day.

Patients across the province are eager to know what this means for them. Minister, what does Ontario’s com-

mitment to patient safety mean for patients, hospitals and health care workers across the province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our commitment to patient safety means better patient care; it’s as simple as that. We know, as I’ve said, if we track it, if we measure it, we can improve it.

Let’s talk about wait times in the Central East LHIN. I’m very happy to say that 100% of cataract surgeries are now being performed within the target; 100% of hip replacements are being performed within the target; 99% of knee replacements are being performed within the target; and 96% of CT scans, 91% of pediatric surgeries and 99% of general surgeries.

Speaker, our decision many years ago to begin to measure and publicly report wait times has made a profound difference. It allows us to invest strategically where we’re not meeting wait times so that the people of the province, no matter where they live, get access to care in a timely way.

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The minister simply won’t come to terms with his addiction to wasteful spending, and the people of Ontario are fed up. Minister, how can you justify to those 600,000 men and women who are out of work in this province the fact that you condone the Municipal Property Assessment Corp.—that you appoint, sir—the fact that they’ve flown in 2,000 bureaucrats to the extravagant performing arts centre at the peak of TIFF for a two-and-a-half-hour Lego party?

Minister, I want to quote MPAC’s website: “MPAC is governed by a 15-member board of directors. Eight members of the board are municipal representatives; five members represent property taxpayers; and two members represent provincial interests. All members of the board are appointed by the Ontario Minister of Finance.”

Minister, you appoint the board. Stand in your place and tell us what you’re going to do about this.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I’d remind the member that, yes, we do appoint the municipal representatives based on the recommendations of AMO and the municipalities.

Interjection: He knows that.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He knows that because it was in fact the Conservative government that set this very unwieldy creature up.

In my view, I don’t condone this expenditure. I think it’s a completely inappropriate use of municipal tax dollars. If I had the directive power to undo it, I would have undone it when I first heard about this about 24 hours ago. Unfortunately, I don’t have that. But what I can say is that we will continue to pursue a balanced budget in those areas that we control.

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My hope is that AMO and our municipal partners will look at this carefully to decide how to handle it. I would invite the member to speak to his local mayors and

others. I concur: I don't think this is an appropriate use of taxpayers' money. It does not make sense. I don't think there's any benefit to municipal taxpayers from this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Again to the minister: I can't believe what I'm hearing. After nine years of scandal and waste that have led to record debt and deficits, I think we all have to acknowledge the elephant in the room. Minister, you have a serious addiction on wasted spending. I can't understand why you condone what's happening with MPAC, the fact that you bring them into town for a two-and-a-half-hour Lego party.

Minister, they are your boards. You appoint them. Do the honourable thing: Rein in their spending or resign.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Speaker, I don't condone this. If I had the legal authority to do what the member asks, I would likely exercise that authority. Regrettably, I don't. Let me say again that I do not condone this. I hope our municipal partners will take this issue very seriously. I do not think it's an appropriate use of taxpayers' money.

I do appoint members based on the recommendation of our municipal partners. We do have two of 15 members on the board who are provincial appointees. This whole situation makes me wonder if we do have to look at the construct of this. It was badly set up initially by the previous government. I think we need to look at MPAC, its future, how it should be governed, who should own it and what's appropriate. Unfortunately, the structure that was set up by the previous government has left us with no ability to influence this. But I do concur with the opposition: This is an inappropriate use of municipal tax dollars.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Speaker, in an August 22 meeting, the Ministry of Labour and the NHL in Toronto, the NHL Players' Association, asked the province to set up a conciliation board to help solve the dispute. But for no apparent reason, the ministry refused the association's request. Speaker, why is this government refusing to do whatever it can do to save the hockey season and the many, many economic benefits that flow from the game?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Speaker, I know—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm asking for order on all sides, please.

Minister.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you, Speaker. I know many people across this province are looking forward to the start of the NHL season, but I would like to bring some clarity to what my ministry's involvement is in the NHL labour negotiations, as I believe there are a few additional process details that would help Ontarians, and

indeed fans, across the floor and across Canada better understand about the hockey negotiations.

In August, on the 22nd, a Ministry of Labour conciliator met with both the NHL and the players' association. During that meeting, the NHL asked the Ministry of Labour to issue a no-board report. The no-board report places both the players' association and the NHL in a lockout position 17 days after it's issued. I want to point out that it only applies to teams in Ontario, the ones that reside in Ontario—the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Ottawa Senators—and that's part of the larger process.

We obviously want to provide details to both sides, and we're bargaining with respect to the teams. Across the US and Canada, these negotiations are going on. They're governed by the respective principle—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Hockey isn't just another game for Ontarians. You spend your childhood being raised with the game. You devote long hours to playing it, watching it and talking about it. For millions of Ontarians, being a real Leaf—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm asking that the government side tone it down, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not while I'm standing either.

Question.

Mr. Paul Miller: For millions of Ontarians, being a real Leafs fan or a real Sens fan is something you live, breathe and talk about every day, especially during hockey season.

Speaker, why does this government refuse the players' association request for conciliation, which could have maybe helped save the upcoming season? Why don't you stand behind the people of Ontario who want hockey?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Speaker, the process that the NHL and the players' association went through happens without political interference, and it is no different than any other labour negotiations that take place across this province.

With respect to the players in Ontario, my ministry has offered mediation assistance, but so far that offer has not been accepted. I understand that the parties are now using the assistance of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service based in Washington, DC.

I know that many people across the province are interested in these negotiations, as am I, but certainly political interference is not what we do. We've got shared responsibility. We want to work with both sides and provide that neutral advice going forward, because we care about hockey too, on this side of the floor.

LABOUR RELATIONS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is also for the Minister of Labour, but I'm afraid this is a little bit more

directly under her control than perhaps hockey in North America.

Minister, this week I've been listening to the official opposition ask question after question about their white paper on health care. I understand this is actually the third paper that has been released and that the official opposition has previously released a white paper on labour. It's actually that release that my constituents have been raising concerns about.

When they hear phrases like "right to work," they're very concerned that far-right-wing policies from the United States are making their way to Canada. My constituents tell me that they are afraid that these schemes will lower their wages and have an adverse effect on the economy. Yesterday, during the debate, I heard some comments about right to work from the official opposition.

I wonder, Minister, if you could reassure my constituents in Guelph that these tactics are not gaining ground in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Stop the clock for a second. First of all, I am standing, and you used your time. Second of all, when the preamble takes place—for all members—I would wish that you would make it clear so that I can make a decision on whether or not it is policy. I know that the question was probably going to wrap that up, but if you do not put your question that way, I may have to bring you back to the policy question.

Now it's time for the Minister of Labour to answer that question.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for a very important question. Over the last eight years, we worked really hard to create a fair and balanced environment for labour negotiations in Ontario. To do that, we've rebuilt relationships that were damaged by the governments that preceded us. This fair and balanced approach to labour relations presents a fairly stark contrast to the divide-and-conquer approach of the official opposition.

In their white paper, they make a lot of unsubstantiated claims about how right-to-work legislation will help Ontario compete with the US market. Leaders across Canada have continuously rejected these claims, including Ralph Klein's Conservative government in Alberta, which determined that right-to-work legislation was unnecessary in helping that province compete with the US.

They based their decision on a 1995 KPMG report which actually indicated that it costs less to do business in Canada. Today that's still the case. Canada ranks third in business costs and the US sixth.

Ontarians are not willing to compromise on their salaries, their quality of life and a fair and balanced environment for employers and employees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Minister, for helping to clarify how our policy differs from the official opposition's and how governments of all stripes have been rejecting that right-to-work policy across Canada.

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Based on what you've said, we seem to be in a good position here in Ontario. Our economy has recovered more than 100% of the jobs lost in the last recession; our minimum wage has increased by 50% since 2003, after nine years of no increases; and our government has built up and maintained a high standard of living for Ontarians.

The official opposition seem convinced that bringing in a right-to-work scheme will increase wages, improve the economy and bring jobs to the province. What has been the actual experience of US states with right-to-work legislation, and how does Ontario compare?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Again, thanks for the question. The opposition would have us believe that this scheme would lead Ontario to higher wages, but the reality is that Ontario already has a higher median household income than every right-to-work state in the US. Furthermore, the median household income of right-to-work states is actually decreasing. Since 2008, over 70% of US right-to-work states have seen a decline in their take-home pay. In Ontario, during the same time period, we saw our household incomes increase, and under the leadership of Ontario's economy, we've recovered all those jobs that we lost in the recession by moving forward together. The opposition claim that their scheme will raise hourly wages. The reality is, our hourly wage manufacturing rate is higher than 87% of right-to-work states and 78% of non-right-to-work states.

Our government is proud of fair wages for Ontario families. I want the member to know that she can tell her constituents that the opposition's white paper is on a labour path to lower wages, a path to a smaller economy and a path that races to the bottom.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of the House and to the public that the government is intentionally obstructing the work of the committee investigating the Ornge scandal. The Premier has now refused on two occasions to testify before the committee. Sophia Ikura, the Premier's senior adviser on health policy, also refused to appear. The government House leader refused to appear to testify before the committee. Now that same government House leader is delaying the reconstitution of the public accounts committee so that it can carry on its important work. I would like to know from the Premier: How can he justify causing this obstruction to the important work of this Legislature? Will he direct his government House leader to agree to reconstitute the committee to investigate the Ornge scandal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm having trouble knowing where to start.

First of all, I never refused to appear in front of the public accounts committee. The fact of the matter is, the public accounts committee clerk sent me an email around 1:30 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon asking if I would appear the next day, and I said that my schedule would not allow it. I think members of this Legislature appreciate that on short notice, it's hard to move forward.

Second of all, it was the opposition party that insisted, when we constituted committees earlier this year, that that motion expire—it would have expired last Sunday, the last day before the sitting began—in an effort for House leaders to review the committee situation and engage in the types—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. That's enough.

Answer.

Hon. John Milloy: As I say, with the opposition's urging, the motion that set up committees expired—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —on Sunday. We are now in the process of talking to House leaders to find out how we can move forward. So, as I say, the honourable member should get his facts straight before he stands up and asks such a ridiculous question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The government House leader can start now by agreeing to appear before the committee. Then the government House leader can agree to sit down with the House leaders and immediately reconstitute the public accounts committee, and then the government House leader can admit to this House that it was he who refused to call Bill 50 before the House for debate, and that's why it still has not been passed.

Let's ask the government House leader to get his facts straight, and let's have the government House leader stand up now and say that committee will be reconstituted today, so it can get on with its work and that he'll be the first witness to appear.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again Mr. Speaker, it is the opposition parties that wanted the motion establishing the committees to expire, and we are now working with House leaders on how to move forward.

We are talking about the composition of committees, Mr. Speaker. We are not talking about the work that the committees are seized with, and the public accounts committee will still be seized with the Ornge issue. We look forward to—after I believe, what is it now, 57 witnesses, 84 hours of committee hearings, 800 pages of Hansard—the work of that committee in making the types of recommendations which will allow us to address

the oversight of organizations like Ornge so that the situation there never occurs again.

We also look forward to the opposition parties to allow Bill 50 to move through this Legislature—an important bill, which is the final piece of the puzzle in addressing some of the problems that were associated with that organization.

ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you'll know that on the James Bay coast there has been an epidemic of attempted suicide by youth on the coast for some time. You will also know that, as a result of work that the communities did from Moose Factory to Peawanuck along with Payukotayno, which is a child and youth service, and help from the Toronto Star, I must add, and the New Democrats, your government gave Payukotayno \$2 million to be able to do some work so they can be proactive in order to try to prevent those attempted suicides from happening.

We now learned this summer that you removed that \$2 million—Payukotayno has lost \$1.7 million out of their budget—which means to say there's no longer an ability to do proactive work. They're going to have to go back to reactive.

Why have you turned your back on the youth of the James Bay?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member opposite for the question. I want to start by saying that our government is committed to ensuring that children and youth who are being provided with support and protection from our children's aid societies, including Payukotayno in the north, have every opportunity to reach their full potential. I want to say that since 2003, in fact, the funding by this government to Payukotayno—the children's aid society that the member opposite is referencing—has increased by more than \$6 million. It's a 98.7% increase since 2003—pretty well a double in the funding that we've provided. In fact, this year we've identified more than \$12 million in planning allocations for the agency for child welfare services.

So I understand the concern of the member opposite. It's a concern that I of course share with him in terms of making sure that we provide the support and protection that these children and families deserve. We are doing just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, it doesn't cut it with the youth. The youth are going to be gathering in Cochrane at the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council meeting this Thursday, and they're going to talk about what they see with their family and friends, who are still unfortunately in a position where far too much attempted suicide is still the norm. We've been able to make some headway because of those monies that were given.

I say to you again: It's one thing to say that you're trying to do the right thing and using all the right words, but if Payukotayno doesn't have the funding, that means they don't have the resources to deal with the proactive work that they've got to do in order to make a dent when it comes to this particular issue.

I urge you, Minister, to reverse your decision. Will you announce in the House today so the youth who are attending Mushkegowuk Tribal Council tomorrow will in fact know that this government is determined to keep that money in place?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, Mr. Speaker, we have doubled the funding to Payukotayno in the last nine years, not including this additional \$12 million that I just referenced. I want to actually specifically and directly thank the staff at Payukotayno for their remarkable contribution to children, their families and to the communities.

With reference to what you're concerned about, youth suicide in the north, just several weeks ago I had a day-long consultation—I participated in the full consultation with experts across the province on preventing youth suicide, and there was a significant presence from the north, including from our First Nations and aboriginal communities. It's a situation and an issue that I take very seriously and this government is working hard on.

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PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Mike Colle: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. For 20 years, the people who live and work in the Eglinton corridor from Scarborough to Etobicoke have been waiting for the new Eglinton Crosstown to be built. They are suffering with pollution, unstoppable gridlock and delays. Ever since the Mike Harris government cancelled the Eglinton subway, they've been waiting for this subway to be built.

I want to ask the Minister of Transportation, when will the people who live and work along Eglinton finally see the construction of the Eglinton Crosstown start once again? When will it start, Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for Eglinton—Lawrence for the question, and I'm happy to speak on this particular landmark project.

Yesterday Metrolinx awarded the first of two contracts to tunnel the underground portion of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT. Work will begin this year and will create over 3,000 jobs. This is an important step in the largest light-rail-transit expansion in Toronto's history, and we're proud of the progress that we are making. Compare our record to the PCs', who actually stopped funding public transit and filled in the Eglinton West subway line with dirt while it was under construction.

We are proud to be the only government in the past 20 years to actually build any transit in the city of Toronto. Our government is delivering real results for Torontonians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Minister. I know that the people who live at Eglinton and Dufferin every day are choking on diesel fumes. In fact, people's carbon monoxide detectors go off when they open their windows on Eglinton and Dufferin. That's how bad the pollution is.

So the people want to know, when will the tunnel-boring machines go in? When will we see clean transit on Eglinton, on Dufferin? When will we see the new transit subway go up to York University, up to Vaughan? When are we going to reverse the incredible benign neglect of the NDP and the horrendous decisions of the Tories? When are we going to get to work—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We know that transit is a priority in the GTA. In addition to the Eglinton Crosstown project, our plan also includes the Finch West LRT, Scarborough rapid transit conversion to LRT, and the Sheppard East LRT. That's \$8.4 billion—transit dollars—delivered by our Toronto caucus.

Work is under way on the air-rail link between Union Station and Pearson airport, Canada's two busiest transit hubs. The revitalization of Union Station will meet the needs of an expected doubling of GO Transit passengers by 2030. We also invested more than \$6 billion in modernizing the GO Transit network and expanded service to places like Kitchener, Guelph, Barrie and Lincolnville. Mr. Speaker, the sanctimonious NDP voted against funding for every single one of those projects.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I'm sure you understand that sound decision-making requires a proper assessment of the financial costs for every project before moving ahead. In fact, Ontarians analyze the costs and benefits of each important decision they make, whether they're buying a new home or starting a business. Somehow your government fails to take even these basic steps before tabling bills that will, and have, cost the province billions of dollars.

But don't take my word for it. Here's what the Auditor General had to say about your Green Energy Act: "...billions of dollars were committed to renewable energy without fully evaluating the impact, the trade-offs and the alternatives through a comprehensive business case analysis."

I'll give you an opportunity to correct these problems, starting tomorrow, by voting in favour of my bill, the transparency in government bills act. Premier, will you commit to making government decision-making more transparent, or will you continue to keep Ontarians in the dark?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Private members' bills—individual members will vote as they see fit with respect to that.

But we do welcome initiatives that increase accountability and transparency.

For instance, that member's party kept the hydro agency's expenses hidden. They promised in 2010 to put their leader's expenses online. They haven't done it. It's still hidden from public scrutiny. I would invite the member to maybe bring forward a bill that would require his leader to put his expenses online the way ministers of the crown and others do.

We welcome transparency and accountability. We've done a lot to undo the secret expenditures of the previous government. I hope their leader will listen to his member and start providing his expenditures online so taxpayers can properly scrutinize them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Premier: Premier, you're like someone who buys a home without doing an inspection. You've got the keys, the mover is in the driveway, but you don't know what you're walking into.

It's kind of like the Liberal government's stance on the cap-and-trade plan. You've already passed legislation and enhanced regulations to implement a job-killing cap-and-trade scheme which the environment minister in fact confirmed the Liberal government is forging ahead with. Yet in July, the finance minister said that he's never evaluated the financial costs of this plan to siphon billions of dollars from Ontario businesses. This is exactly why Bill 109 is needed. We know full well that if there's no requirement to assess how new laws will affect Ontarians, the Liberal government won't do it.

Premier, I have to ask: How do you have the audacity to table legislation in this House that will cost Ontario businesses billions of dollars without conducting a proper cost-benefit assessment?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, let's just take a look at the record. We broadened the scope of freedom-of-information legislation. The Auditor General must approve our financial books before an election so that we can't hide a deficit the way that party did. We extended freedom of information to the hydro agencies, and what did we find when we put the expenditures out? They owned a box at Maple Leaf Gardens, where they hosted Tory cabinet ministers.

We have provided for that accountability. In 2009, the Premier directed all government agencies, boards and commissions to strictly adhere to the rules of our public travel, meal and hospitality expenses. The only person not complying is the Leader of the Opposition. Post your expenses. Live up to your word. Quit hiding it. Mr. Speaker, let taxpayers see if he's still expensing his fishing licence. Let taxpayers see how much he's spending on alcohol. Let taxpayers understand what transparent—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's hear your point of order.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to wish Rocco from legislative broadcast, who just left, a very happy birthday today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Algoma-Manitoulin for introduction of guests.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Absolutely. Unfortunately, she's not able to be here with us; she's a patient over at Sick Kids right now. Her name is Haley Janes. She's from Elliot Lake, and I just wanted to send her my greetings. I hope you get well quite soon.

I spent a wonderful half-hour putting a little bit of a smile on her face last night while she was there at the hospital. Please say hi to her.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We all do. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ST MARYS CEMENT

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: In 1912, John Lind and Alfred Rogers founded a small business in the town of St. Marys. With help from investors, they built a two-kiln, 180-ton-per-day cement plant. In the riverbeds and riverbanks of St. Marys, limestone could be quarried for building materials. Lind and Rogers capitalized on the area's natural raw material.

Their small business became a much larger business, making St Marys Cement one of Ontario's major producers of cement and a major success story for our area. In fact, it helped define it, attracting people and businesses to St. Marys that benefit the community and the entire region.

St Marys today operates two cement plants in Ontario, along with over 40 ready-mix concrete plants and 12 aggregate pits and quarries. They employ more than 1,700 people across the province. Their materials are found in schools, hospitals, highways, public transit, sewers, treatment plants and power plants.

The company has worked hard to be good environmental stewards and supports numerous community causes. On this Saturday, September 15, the company is holding an open house to celebrate its 100th anniversary. I look forward to joining them.

I want to congratulate this extraordinary company and all their dedicated employees on this important milestone. St. Marys, after all, is called Stonetown, and for good reasons.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I rise with a heavy heart and serious concerns for some of the residents of my riding. Hamilton city council has once again been

forced to pick up the pieces that have been downloaded by this Liberal government. Due to government cutbacks to the social supports program, the city of Hamilton has been left with a \$7-million hole in next year's budget for programs that deal with tackling homelessness.

Thank goodness for Hamilton, there's a council who will just not close their eyes to the residents who need the extra assistance, but even with that goodwill, Hamilton councillors will only be able to cover half of the \$7-million shortfall. This is going to leave families falling farther behind and add to the high taxes that Hamiltonians are already facing.

The community start-up and maintenance benefit is a program that provides extra funds for Ontario Works and ODSP recipients. These extra funds help recipients when they have to move or they're in need of last month's rent. These funds have also been used when families are struggling with bedbugs and have found themselves without beds and furniture. By no means are these luxuries; they're essentials.

In May of this year, the city of Hamilton had already put \$1.8 million into the discretionary benefit for Ontario Works recipients when the province decided to put a cap on the cities for the funds that they need for things such as funerals, eyeglasses and dental care.

I urge the Minister of Community and Social Services to reconsider these cuts, as they not only affect our most marginalized residents but also impact significantly on the residential tax base.

ROBBI WELDON

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thunder Bay is home to a remarkable number of incredible athletes—professional, amateur and recreational. Robbi Weldon has definitely earned her place as one of our city's most extraordinary athletes. She recently returned to Thunder Bay from the Paralympic Games in London with a gold medal in road cycling. Robbi Weldon is legally blind, and with her pilot, Lyne Bessette, won the women's 80-kilometre individual B road race at the Paralympic Games in London, England.

This is only part of Robbi's incredible story. Robbi can also lay claim to being Canada's top Para-Nordic skier. Her success includes two Canadian championships, and she was ranked third internationally in overall World Cup points. Robbi was Canada's top placing female Nordic skier at the 2010 Vancouver Paralympic Games, finishing fourth in the cross-country competition and sixth in the biathlon. It was only then that she shifted her focus to competitive cycling.

But, Speaker, there's more. In college, Robbi Weldon began participating in powerlifting, concentrating on the squat, bench press and dead lift. At the 1996 World Championships in Colorado Springs, Robbi Weldon of Thunder Bay set world records in not one, not two but all three disciplines.

Robbi Weldon is an extraordinary athlete by any measurement. She has achieved incredible accomplish-

ments in so many fields of athletic endeavour. On behalf of the citizens of Thunder Bay, I want to thank Robbi and congratulate her on her remarkable achievements. I wish her continued success in her future endeavours.

LAKERIDGE HEALTH

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Lakeridge Health is one of the largest community hospital corporations in Ontario, and their Whitby campus is a true leader in health care. A specialty hospital focusing on complex continuing care and rehabilitation, the hard-working staff know all too well about the impact of an aging population on our health care resources.

The team at Lakeridge Health Whitby has risen to the challenge. They are the first hospital in the province to fully embrace a nurse practitioner-led model of care where nurse practitioners can admit, diagnose, treat and discharge patients. This is not only great news for families and seniors in my community, but it's also a big step toward developing a sustainable, affordable world-class health care system.

This change means that nurses will be able to look after patients from the beginning of their treatment to their discharge, which improves the quality of health care they receive. That's good for patients, nurses and Ontario's health care system.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I'd like to recognize the phenomenal achievement of Lakeridge Health for leading innovation in our health care system. Congratulations to Lakeridge.

NUTRITION LABELLING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, a very important symposium took place at Queen's Park. It is called Writing on the Wall. It's a five-city symposium series about putting nutrition information on restaurant menus. Toronto is the third stop after Vancouver and Winnipeg, and they will be holding similar conferences in Ottawa and Halifax.

The Toronto symposium was co-sponsored by the Centre for Science in the Public Interest, a not-for-profit publisher of Nutrition Action Healthletter, and the Ontario Medical Association. Their president, Dr. Doug Weir, gave very sobering closing remarks on the health effects of poor nutrition. He also continues to be a champion of menu labelling.

This brings me to my private member's bill, Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating. This bill is quite simple. It mandates big chain restaurants to put calories on foods they offer on their menu board. That in itself won't fix the obesity epidemic, but it will empower the people of Ontario to make healthy choices for themselves and their families.

Today at 11:30, McDonald's restaurants president Jan Fields announced that starting next week, menu boards in the chain's restaurants and drive-throughs will contain calorie counts for all menu items. If McDonald's can do

this in one week for the 25 million people they serve every day, I think it is high time that Ontario put nutritional information on restaurant menus. The time has come, Mr. Speaker.

MAYFAIR THEATRE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: This is a great opportunity to talk about an iconic institution in my riding of Ottawa Centre. Mayfair Theatre is one of Ottawa's last two neighbourhood cinemas, one of the oldest surviving independent movie houses in all of Canada and the oldest movie theatre in Ottawa.

Built in 1932, in the depths of the Great Depression, the Mayfair is currently in its 80th uninterrupted season. Fred Robertson, a retailer from Almonte, was the Mayfair's original owner, and the theatre remained under Robertson family ownership for half a century.

The theatre has the distinction of never having been owned by or affiliated with any of the major cinema chains and is proud of its independent roots and its role as a centrepiece of the Old Ottawa South community in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

1510

In 2008, the Mayfair was declared an official heritage building by the city of Ottawa for its unique architectural and cultural value to the nation's capital. The Mayfair Theatre is an atmospheric theatre designed in the Spanish Revival style. Designer René de Vos created the atmosphere of a Mediterranean plaza that features an ornate painted ceiling, false stone facades and balconies, wrought iron work and ornamental glass windows.

The Mayfair opened on December 5, 1932, with *The Blue Danube*. Adult admission prices were 15 cents for matinees and 25 cents for evening performances. In the 1980s, the Mayfair moved to a repertory format, and on Sundays and Mondays, Chinese-language films were played. Now the Mayfair's programming includes cult films, family matinees, late-night presentations and, of course, Speaker, the annual Rocky Horror Picture Show every Halloween.

Congratulations to the co-owners: Lee Demarbre, Ian Driscoll, Josh Stafford and Petr Maur.

TERRY FOX RUN

Mr. Rob Leone: I rise today to speak of a cause near and dear to all Canadians. Terry Fox remains one of our most beloved Canadian figures in this country's great history. While battling cancer, he was fearless as he embarked on an 8,000-kilometre Marathon of Hope to raise money and awareness for the devastating disease that touches so many Canadian families.

We all know that Terry's brave voyage was tragically cut short, just like the lives of far too many Canadians who took up their own fight. With all the documentaries about Terry, the 14 schools named after him, the 15 roads, monuments, postage stamps and an Athlete of the Decade Award, Terry only wanted one thing. "Even if I

don't finish," said Fox during his run, "we need others to continue. It's got to keep going without me."

Since his death in 1981, adults and children alike have taken to streets, parks and schools every September to finish what Fox started. He would be proud: his passion echoed, his accomplishments influential, his legacy cherished.

Both Cambridge and Ayr will host their own Terry Fox Runs this Sunday, September 16. Since 1982, the Cambridge total has raised over half a million dollars. This year, one of my constituents, Cowen Charrette, only four years old, has already raised \$300 for his first run. I encourage all Cambridge and Ayr residents to register, to run or to support the numerous participants eager to effect change and bring an end to this horrible disease. Please visit www.terryfox.org to learn more.

CARNET DE LA FRANCOPHONIE DES AMÉRIQUES

M. Phil McNeely: Le Centre de la francophonie des Amériques est un organisme qui a pour mission de contribuer à la promotion et à la mise en valeur d'une francophonie dans le contexte de la diversité culturelle. Il mise sur le renforcement et l'enrichissement des relations entre les communautés francophones et aussi sur l'apport des nombreux francophiles.

Leur vision d'une francophonie en mouvement, solidaire et inclusive regroupant les Amériques les a amené à mettre sur place un nouvel outil : le Carnet de la francophonie des Amériques. Ce carnet se veut un répertoire des organismes francophones reconnus offrant des services en français. On y retrouvera, entre autres, les établissements institutionnels, scolaires et communautaires ainsi que les associations et entreprises à but lucratif. Une application mobile est aussi prévue pour les utilisateurs possédant un téléphone intelligent.

Le répertoire sera disponible gratuitement à l'automne 2012 pour toute la communauté francophone. J'aimerais donc inviter tous mes collègues à me joindre et à s'inscrire au Carnet des Amériques au www.francophoniedesameriques.com.

FOOD PROCESSORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This morning, the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors released a study showing the economic impact of their industry. It found that the total direct and indirect output generated by the food and beverage manufacturers in Ontario's economy is about \$67 billion. It generates over 360,000 jobs and close to \$5 billion in tax revenue.

The report illustrates how vital this sector is to the success of our agriculture industry and our economy. It demonstrates that the government should be looking at how we can help them grow and ensure that the government isn't blocking their success. As executive director Steve Peters said this morning, "If managed and supported properly, there are tremendous opportunities."

But this government has a poor track record. They have dramatically increased the cost of hydro and burdened these businesses with excessive red tape, permits and paperwork. The Liberals promised they would create a one-window access to government, as the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors recommended several years ago, but they are breaking that promise. A year after the Liberals copied our commitment to create one window, they have not actually taken any action to implement the promise.

We understand that food manufacturers are the number two industry in Ontario and the number one purchaser of agriculture products. On behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, I was pleased to meet with the representatives of the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors today to hear about the challenges they are facing. We look forward to continuing to work with the food processors to help strengthen the industry and, through that, the Ontario economy. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIRST RESPONDERS DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DES PREMIERS INTERVENANTS

Mr. Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to proclaim First Responders Day /
Projet de loi 119, Loi proclamant le Jour des premiers intervenants.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Frank Klees: If passed, this bill will designate May 1 in each year as First Responders Day in Ontario. First responders are those men and women who, in the early stages of an emergency, are responsible for the protection of life, property, evidence and the environment.

I want to thank my constituent Vali Stone for the inspiration behind this bill. Her book entitled 911: True Tales of Courage and Compassion contains the first-hand accounts of 34 first responders who have courageously shared some of their most memorable experiences in the course of carrying out their duties. These accounts and my first-hand experiences with first responders over the past number of months, the paramedics and pilots of our air ambulance service, confirmed for me that the heroes among us—the police officers, firefighters, paramedics, medical evacuation pilots, dispatchers, doctors, nurses and those serving in our military, including the many volunteers who dedicate countless hours to emergency response—deserve to be recognized for their selfless service to our communities in our province.

I would ask all members to support this bill at second reading, scheduled for September 27.

REGISTERED RETIREMENT SAVINGS PROTECTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RÉGIMES ENREGISTRÉS D'ÉPARGNE EN VUE DE LA RETRAITE

Mr. Leal moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings /
Projet de loi 120, Loi visant à protéger les régimes enregistrés d'épargne en vue de la retraite.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jeff Leal: This is a bill that I introduced previously to this Legislature. Previously it did get third reading, but not royal assent.

This would allow Ontario to join the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan to provide bankruptcy protection for people who have RSPs and RIFs in the province of Ontario. I would encourage all members to support this bill at second reading when it's debated on Thursday, September 27.

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ABILITY TO PAY ACT, 2012 LOI DE 2012 SUR LA CAPACITÉ DE PAYER

Mr. Wilson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act to deal with arbitration in the public sector /
Projet de loi 121, Loi traitant de l'arbitrage dans le secteur public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Jim Wilson: This bill enacts the Ability to Pay Act, 2012. The legislation is designed to address arbitrator decisions in recent years where public sector unions receive settlements far in excess of the growth in the economy. The result was to place a heavy burden on taxpayers at the Ontario and local levels as governments struggled with record deficits and a lagging economy. These decisions were allowed to happen because the interest arbitration system in Ontario is broken. It's broken because public sector unions, unlike their private sector counterparts, do not have to moderate demands to prevent putting their companies out of business. Public sector unions simply don't face these pressures because they assume governments will just raise taxes or run

deficits on the backs of future generations. Our legislation seeks to correct this inequity and requires that consideration be given to local, economic and sectorial related costs vis-à-vis a public employer's ability to pay.

The Progressive Conservative Ability to Pay Act will, if passed, achieve three main things:

- establish a permanent panel of independent arbitrators chosen by the minister;

- list specific criteria arbitrators must use when rendering decisions and explain in writing how and why decisions were made; and

- create an independent wage board within the Ministry of Finance called the Ability to Pay division to assess and monitor decisions made by arbitrators.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of bills?

I will take this moment to make an observation because I'm not interfering with anyone's time. That is, as I've indicated once before, we would wish that you read from the explanatory notes in introducing a bill and not make a statement or a speech that you would be making when the bill is introduced for second reading.

I am aware that one of these bills had a larger explanatory note, and I appreciate the efforts of the member for condensing that. That's exactly what I would recommend. But going off-script and starting to give a speech is what I'm trying to get at. So I would remind everybody to use the explanatory notes or condense your comments as a brief explanation of what the bill is. Thank you very much.

PETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to perform my regular function here with some accuracy.

From my riding of Durham, I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary;

"Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt;

"Whereas concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams and the underground water supply;

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations;

"Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at" an alternative site "such as Cherrywood or Wesleyville;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Ontario Legislature support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles" and a full environmental assessment.

I'm pleased to sign this, support it and give it to Roberto, one of the pages here.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

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

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to give it to Simran. I'm going to sign it, and she will deliver it to the table.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly on the prevention of electoral fraud in Ontario.

"Whereas it is the right of every Canadian to vote once in each election for the candidate of his or her choice and have their vote fairly counted and not offset by faulty voter registration or any sort of illegal practices; and

"Whereas credible allegations of voting irregularities exist for the most recent election, including non-citizens voting, persons voting multiple times at various voting stations and errors on the permanent register of electors list; and

"Whereas the practice of 'vouching' has been practised in polling stations where it is not permitted, such as non-rural polling stations, and does not require verified proof of a person's age, citizenship and residence in a riding;

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

"To support Bill 106, Prevention of Electoral Fraud Act, 2012, by Bas Balkissoon, the member for Scar-

borough–Rouge River, that would require that voters present proof of Canadian citizenship; require the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario to appoint an independent party to conduct a review of the permanent register of electors within six months after the bill passes and subsequently every five years; allow scrutineers to monitor the process by which voters add their names to the voters list on election day; and forbid vouching, which currently excludes the requirement for legitimate identification.”

I support this petition, and I will have page Sashin bring it to the Clerk.

BREAST CANCER

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry. The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. You’re right on the ball today.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas breast cancer is the most common cancer among women, with one in eight women expected to develop it during their lifetime, as well as 1% of breast cancer cases being found in men;

“Whereas it is estimated that 62 Canadian women are diagnosed with breast cancer and 14 Canadian women die from breast cancer every day;

“Whereas early detection of breast cancer increases chances of survival but being able to identify risk factors before breast cancer develops and take preventative measures to avoid cancer is even more effective;

“Whereas breast thermography is one of the best early detection systems that uses infrared imaging of the breast tissue to identify whether a woman has the early stages of a cancerous tumour or is at a high risk of developing breast cancer;

“Whereas used in conjunction with regular mammograms and ultrasounds as part of a woman’s regular breast health checkup, survival rates increase by 61%;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care consider including breast thermography examination as part of the benefit package included in a regular breast health checkup.”

I agree with the petition and affix my signature to it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Miss Monique Taylor: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the legislative cuts to the funding for ophthalmology diagnostic tests are up to 80%; and

“Whereas these cuts were implemented without consulting physicians about the impact such cuts will have on the health care of patients;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect ophthalmology

services and consult with the physicians before making cuts to our health care system.”

I agree with this petition. I’ll affix my name to it and give it to page Andrew to bring to the Clerk.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas it is the right of every Canadian to vote once in each election for the candidate of his or her choice and have their vote fairly counted and not offset by faulty voter registration or any sort of illegal practices; and

“Whereas credible allegations of voting irregularities exist for the most recent election, including non-citizens voting, persons voting multiple times at various voting stations and errors on the permanent register of electors list; and

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“Whereas the practice of ‘vouching’ has been practised in polling stations where it is not permitted, such as non-rural polling stations, and does not require verified proof of a person’s age, citizenship and residence in a riding;

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

“To support Bill 106, Prevention of Electoral Fraud Act, 2012, by Bas Balkissoon, the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, that would require that voters present proof of Canadian citizenship; require the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario to appoint an independent party to conduct a review of the permanent register of electors within six months after the bill passes and subsequently every five years; allow scrutineers to monitor the process by which voters add their names to the voters list on election day; and forbid vouching, which currently excludes the requirement for legitimate identification.”

I support this petition, I’ll sign it and I’ll have page Maggie take it to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

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

“Whereas Ontario’s cardiologists provide accessible, efficient and cost-effective diagnostic testing services that save, and improve, the lives of thousands of people each year; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s unilateral, punitive changes to the OHIP fee schedule will result in the elimination of these crucial services, thereby leading to a reduction in patient access to care, the lengthening of waiting lists for services, the eradication of high-quality health professional jobs, and an increase in preventable deaths; and

“Whereas the Ontario Association of Cardiologists has presented an alternative, namely, the implementation of new, rigorous standards, which would ensure that cardiac diagnostic tests are done on the right patients, at the right

time, by appropriately trained people, in accredited facilities, thereby reducing the number of inappropriate tests and leading to significant financial savings for the government” of Ontario; “and

“Whereas the proposal has the endorsement of the highly respected Cardiac Care Network of Ontario;

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

“Direct the Ontario government to repeal the OHIP fee schedule regulation changes filed on May 7, 2012, and instruct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to work with the Ontario Association of Cardiologists to implement proposed cardiac diagnostic testing standards across the province.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition, and I thank my constituents for signing it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Simran—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Ottawa–Orléans.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Phil McNeely: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is presently an interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study under way to locate a new bridge across the Ottawa River east of the downtown of Ottawa;

“Whereas the province of Ontario is improving the 174/417 split and widening Highway 417 from the split to Nicholas at an estimated cost of \$220 million;

“Whereas that improvement was promised to and is urgently needed by the community of Orléans and surrounding areas;

“Whereas the federal government has moved almost 5,000 RCMP jobs from the downtown to Barrhaven;

“Whereas the federal government is moving 10,000 Department of National Defence jobs from the downtown to Kanata;

“Whereas over half these jobs were held by residents of Orléans and surrounding communities;

“Whereas the economy of Orléans will be drastically impacted by the movement of these jobs westerly;

“Whereas additional capacity will be required for residents who will have to commute across our city to those jobs;

“We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation to do their part to stop this environmental assessment; and further, that the new road capacity being built on 174 and 417 be kept for Orléans and surrounding communities in Ontario; and further, that the province of Ontario assist the city of Ottawa in convincing the federal government to fund the light rail from Blair Road to Trim Road, which is much more needed now that 15,000 jobs accessible to residents of Orléans are moved out of reach to the west.

“We, the undersigned, support this petition and affix our names hereunder.”

I support this petition and send it forward with Sydney.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am pleased to share the following petition:

“Whereas Premier McGuinty has imposed fee schedule cuts to family physicians and proposed wage freezes unilaterally, he has therefore alienated the province’s family doctors. These actions threaten the future of health care in Ontario and will compound the existing family physician shortage. As wait times for primary care will inevitably increase, so will the frustration of millions of Ontarians;

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

“We ask that the Premier reconsider his decision and return to the negotiating table with the Ontario Medical Association and the province’s doctors, thereby working alongside patients and their primary care providers.”

I agree with this petition, I affix my signature and I’ll give it to Ethan to deliver to the table.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

“Whereas the Dog Owners’ Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law.”

I’m signing this on behalf of the 1,000 dogs that have already been euthanized because of the way they look, and I’m going to give it to Andrew to be delivered to the table.

RADIATION SAFETY

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

“Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is in serious need of modernization;

“Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is not in harmony with all the following acts, regulations, guidelines and codes: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, the radiation protection regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the safety codes of Health Canada and the radiation protection guidelines of the International Commission on Radiological Protection;

“Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

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

“To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by Reza Moridi, the member from Richmond Hill, that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations, make recommendations on how to modernize this act, and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.”

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a report from Ontario’s Auditor General on the province’s air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers’ dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised;

“Whereas Ornge officials created a ‘mini-conglomerate’ of private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for \$300 million in debt;

“Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to \$700 million, while the number of patients it airlifted actually declined;

“Whereas a subsidiary of Ornge bought the head office building in Mississauga for just over \$15 million and then leased it back to Ornge at a rate 40% higher than fair market rent;

“Whereas the Liberal Minister of Health completely failed in her duty to provide proper oversight of Ornge;

“Whereas, despite being made fully aware of the situation at Ornge, the Minister of Health continues to supply Ornge with funding to transport 20,000 patients by land transport each year, despite the fact that Ornge only carries 3,000 patients;

“Whereas Ornge is being paid an average of \$7,700 for each patient they transfer by air and \$1,700 for each patient they transfer by land ambulance, both clearly amounts vastly in excess of reasonable compensation for the services provided;

“Whereas this latest scandal follows the eHealth boondoggle where \$2 billion in health dollars have been wasted;

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

“The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge.”

I agree with this petition and I’ll affix my name to it.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OPERATOR ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ D’EXPLOITATION DU RÉSEAU D’ÉLECTRICITÉ DE L’ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 11, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 and to make complementary amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 75, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l’électricité pour fusionner la Société indépendante d’exploitation du réseau d’électricité et l’Office de l’électricité de l’Ontario, modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l’énergie de l’Ontario et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d’autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This debate ended, I believe, with the member from Leeds–Grenville. We now go into two-minute rotations, and then we’ll continue debate after that.

Questions and comments?

Mr. John O’Toole: I will say that when the member from Leeds–Grenville was speaking—the really important thing here is they’re creating a mega-organization,

another bureaucracy. We now have two bureaucracies: the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, and the Ontario Power Authority—both large, overpaid bureaucracies. Now we're creating the larger one, the combining of the two.

What's going to happen here—and Steve pointed this out very accurately—is they're going to give a severance package to all the people at OPA and IESO, and then they're going to hire them back at this new organization, the OSA, I think it's called, the Ontario Liberal Party—no, whatever. Here's the deal, though: This is another scandalous waste of public money under a Premier McGuinty government that has lost its way in the wilderness of time.

We know that electricity prices have doubled. We know that Ontario has the largest and highest electricity prices in all of Canada and the United States, I believe, with the exception of one jurisdiction.

And I know this: They have this tax credit. The McGuinty government knew they had gone too far, too fast on price, so they gave them some kind of tax credit. Still, the game is up. The seniors of Ontario can hardly open their mail for fear of finding another hydro bill.

I can say that this bill is going to do a lot less, but cost a lot more. Combining two organizations—it's going to take them a year or two to get organized.

I think the member from Leeds–Grenville summarized our argument perfectly—and I'll be voting the way he spoke in his bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. It was a little bit tough for me to remember what he had spoken about, but the member from Durham kind of reminded me.

We presently have those four bureaucracies that look after our electrical system. In Ontario, not that long ago, we used to have one. Then, when the Conservatives were in power, they decided to privatize part of this. They decided to decentralize, and four huge bureaucracies have grown out. Have we seen savings? Well, we all get our hydro bills. I'll leave the customers to tell us how this worked out—it didn't. Ontario pays the highest electricity costs of any other province in Canada. There is no reason for this. I come from northern Ontario. There are more hydroelectric possibilities than we certainly take advantage of. Then when we look at how we use the existing hydro-making facilities, it is a real disgrace, Mr. Speaker.

Is there room for improvement? Absolutely. We don't need four bureaucracies with CEOs who make in the realm of \$1 million, \$500,000, \$650,000 a year. We just have to look next door. Let's look at Manitoba, which did not privatize their electricity, which has everything under one roof. This everything under one roof—they pay about \$300,000 a year for the CEO of all this. Why is it that in Ontario we need four CEOs to do the exact same thing as they do in Manitoba? Not only do we need four, but we pay each and every one of them at least double

what they pay in Manitoba—and when I say double, for some of them it's four times the price that they pay in Manitoba.

There's room for improvement, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in this House in response to the member from Durham and the honourable member from Nickel Belt.

I'll just make a few comments about this new agency, which is going to be formed as a result of amalgamation of the two existing agencies.

We are in the process of amalgamating these two agencies, once the bill passes this House, to streamline the process and to save a considerable amount of money. Actually, 15% of the cost of these agencies will be saved as a result of this amalgamation.

It's very interesting to see that the member from Nickel Belt is criticizing this event, while just a few months ago, or about a year ago, they were advocating for the amalgamation of those electricity agencies and corporations. They were asking us to put them all together to create a very huge organization, as we had in the past, actually. We had Ontario Hydro, a huge organization. So it's rather interesting to hear that now they have changed their position.

With regard to hydro power, yes, we are developing hydro power in Ontario. We don't have lots of rivers and dams in Ontario but we are doing our best. Just a few projects, Mr. Speaker, particularly in northern Ontario. We are actually refurbishing about 700 megawatts of hydro power; we are building a tunnel in Niagara Falls that will create about 1.6 billion kilowatt hours of electricity, which will power about 160,000 homes. Also, we are building the Lower Mattagami hydroelectric power station, with 400 megawatts of capacity, which will be producing electricity to power about 150,000 homes.

These are just some of the hydro projects we are in the process of doing. So just in response to the honourable members, this agency—the new agency—will streamline the electricity sector in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I too had the pleasure, like my colleague from Durham, of listening to the member from Leeds–Grenville and his synopsis and thoughts on Bill 75 and, in a broader way, on the mess that the McGuinty Liberals have made of our electricity system here in Ontario.

You'll recall that during the campaign of 2011 we made a commitment that we would get rid of the OPA. The Liberals didn't want to talk about that, but this bill is an admission that it is a mess. They're not going to get rid of it, but they're somehow going to meld the OPA into the IESO and, in a roundabout way, get rid of it, because it's been a boondoggle from the start. It was going to be a virtual agency—not a real agency, just a virtual agency. It turned into one of the biggest money

siphons that the province has ever seen, hundreds of millions of dollars, and it doesn't produce a megawatt of power. It does nothing; it's administrative.

But what it did do—it was a heat shield, like in Star Trek when Kirk would say, “Put down the heat shields,” or whatever, “The Klingons are coming.” When the Conservatives were coming to rip apart Ontario Liberal energy policy, they used the OPA as the shield because force—whatever it was—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Force field.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Force—yes; you know what I'm talking about, Speaker.

It was designed to protect the Minister of Energy. Do you know who the Minister of Energy was when this OPA was conceived? None other than the minister of \$15-billion deficits today—Dwight Duncan. So you've got McGuinty, Duncan and deficits, and the OPA is now going to amalgamate under Bill 75 with the IESO. This is a shell game of the highest order, and you know who's going to get caught? It's going to be the ratepayers and the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Leeds–Grenville has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the members for Durham, Nickel Belt, Richmond Hill and also the little Star Trek memory from the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

We're talking about Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act. Let's make no mistake: It creates a new mega-agency. It empowers the Minister of Energy to meddle even more in the system. It takes away, actually, what little accountability and oversight there is in the system.

I want to make things very clear: Ontarians have seen this before and, quite frankly, they're getting tired of it. This is a mess. They expect some relief, some accountability and some transparency, and they're not getting it with Bill 75.

I do want to make one other observation that I made yesterday. This bill received first reading on April 26.

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It took this government five months to get our committee system in place. They delayed and delayed. They can't manage the minority system. They can't get legislation through. We're now into our third week back, and we're still spinning our wheels.

This government continues to blame the opposition parties. They have no one to blame but themselves for the reason bills are introduced in April and are still at first reading stage. You can't run the Legislature without having a committee system set up, without having an opportunity for the public to provide input, and I'm telling you, I'm off to a meeting here in about three minutes, and when I get out of that meeting, we'd better have a committee system set up. This is a disgrace, for this government to continue to take six months. We've been in office now not even a year, and you are the ones who are delaying this legislation. You can't manage the minority Parliament. You need to smarten up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I'm lucky I didn't have a petition.

Once again, I'm honoured to be able to stand on behalf of my constituents and voice their concerns on G75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012. Electricity is an important issue in my riding, as it is in the rest of the province. In fact, for the last person I talked to as I was travelling out of my riding last Sunday, it was the most important topic. I was getting gas at the Dam Depot in Latchford, and I introduced myself to the attendant, who I had never met. Her name was Tracy, and Tracy wasn't particularly interested in politics—she wasn't interested in politics at all—but she was interested in electricity and about how she couldn't afford the price, about how she signed on with an independent energy retailer thinking she would get a break and the price had actually doubled, and how she felt vulnerable and powerless in dealing with one of her basic necessities, electricity. Tracy's story mirrors many of the people in my riding; in fact, complaints about electricity prices, energy retailers and smart meters make up about half of the complaints brought to our office.

Smart meters are my favourite, because I've got my own personal smart meter story. I ran a dairy farm. Our electricity bill was about \$1,500 a month, which we paid every three months, and on the third month, when we got the bill, there was \$5,000 more charged. So I called and they said, “Well, sir, did you check your air conditioner? Did you check your freezer?” I said, “Come on.” You can't argue, so we split the difference over the next three months, and I thought, “You know what? We'll see what happens.” Next month, I got a credit for \$20,000, so I didn't call.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: Because I thought, you know, “They'll figure this out.” About a week later, they made a change to my bill. The credit was now \$12,000, so I called, because I had lost \$8,000 in three days. I got the manager, they looked into it, and after about a week they estimated that my electricity bill was, yes, \$5,000 too high. No explanation, no answer, but they put in a new smart meter. But can you imagine all the people who come to my office and are dealing with that?

So my constituents would rather the government put forward bills that they felt were more directly related to their everyday needs, like smart meters or the price, not the merger of two bodies that the majority of them have never heard of. But here we are debating the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act. Although people like Tracy might not see the connection, this bill could have a direct impact on people like her. In fact, there is a distinct similarity with the energy retailer and this bill, because what you see at first glance—what the government wants to talk about—and what is actually contained in the bill are two different things.

The bill proposes to merge the OPA and the IESO—to the people at home, two nameless, faceless agencies. The

Ontario Power Authority, for short, is the agency that negotiates the power contracts with the power generators, be they big utilities or microFIT projects. The OPA bureaucracy has ballooned considerably over the years, as has the number of private power contracts. The Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO, is the agency that actually regulates Ontario's power supply. This is not an easy task, since electricity can't be stored like firewood. Too little and you have a brownout or blackout; too much and you have to get rid of it, in some cases paying people to use it or turning turbines, in our area of the woods, in reverse to burn it up.

In Ontario, we currently have so much power sometimes that we actually pay other provinces and states to use our surplus power. The government pays other jurisdictions to take it, but on the flip side, we pay generators sometimes exorbitant prices, up to 80 cents a kilowatt, to make it. When you buy high and pay to give the power away, somebody has to pay the difference, and that would be us, the Ontario consumers, through the global adjustment fee. To make matters worse, when they pay companies outside the province to take the power, they can't even collect the global adjustment fee from them.

Merging the agency that buys and the agency that regulates the power would seem to make some sense. In fact, it does, and we support that part of the bill. It will hopefully save some money on administration—the government predicts \$25 million. Hopefully, they will be able to produce the documents to prove that. In fact, we in the last election campaign proposed to reintegrate all the electricity agencies except one back under one corporation like Ontario Hydro.

We opposed the initial dismantling and partial privatization of Ontario Hydro by the Conservatives under Mike Harris and the acceleration of the process by the McGuinty Liberals. Both governments have aided in the process by changing the public institution upon which much of the manufacturing and refining backbone of this province is built into a multi-tentacled mishmash of private and public interests that have driven the price so high that it has actually killed many industries in this province.

This is one step in the right direction—not a change of direction; more of a pause in the shift pattern. Hopefully, this is a pause that will indicate a shift into reverse and not a shift into overdrive. But there is a big catch in this proposal. As part of the merger, it eliminates the power authority's power and duty to develop an integrated power system plan, an IPSP—don't you love those short forms?—for approval by the Ontario Energy Board.

The Ontario Energy Board is the watchdog agency and is the one agency that should not be reintegrated. Under the current legislation, the OPA has to submit their energy plans to the Ontario Energy Board so the stakeholders, namely the public, can get a chance to test the government's plans for their effectiveness and efficiency before a hearing at the OEB, if they so choose.

This proposed legislation removes that step and replaces the integrated power supply plan with ministerial

energy plans, and removes the public component that is a very legitimate concern. It's a concern, because we all know what happens when political interference from ministers and others enters into the energy mix. What we get is gas plants that move around like game pieces in Ontario election monopoly—\$180 million here; \$180 million there—all political decisions not based on need or energy strategy but based on election strategy. But who pays the bill? Ontario taxpayers, in money that could be used in much better places for people like Tracy.

Another one: Look at the Green Energy Act, a colossal bungling of a good initiative. Who wouldn't want to have more green energy? Ontario was going to be the new green energy leader: a great political idea. It should have even worked from a policy perspective. It should have. But it was forced on rural Ontario without consultation and by denying local municipalities a say in the planning process. The government has divided much of rural Ontario on this issue just because they focused on votes instead of practical policy.

Furthermore, if you talk to the people who actually regulate the energy balance across the province, the way that the Green Energy Act was implemented was a nightmare because it did not take into account where the energy is needed or where it should be produced. So obviously, the government didn't listen to the people whose job it is to regulate the energy for the province.

The current legislation before us, G75, has glaring examples, which I've just explained, of how lack of public knowledge and participation leads to bad overall energy policy. The ministerial energy plans idea proposed in this legislation would only make a bad situation worse. We need to make decisions on energy policy more transparent, not less. We have to make overall government more transparent, not less, regardless of who's in power. The only way you're going to make things better—the more people know about it when I run my business and somebody else walks in who knows—the thing is, you have to listen to people who know more about your business than you do. When I run my business and somebody walks in who knows more about feeding cows than I do, and he says, "You know, John, you should maybe try this and this"—you look at it and you talk to other people. You don't just say, "Well, I'm going to do it this way because I want to hurt my neighbour."

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The part of this legislation that removes even more public scrutiny from the energy planning process is like a non-starter. It's a non-starter. There are parts of this legislation that are a good step, although a small step, forward. But the part where you take even less public scrutiny is an absolute non-starter.

Look at the trouble we have now trying to get numbers—numbers that should just be given freely. Because, after all, it's all the taxpayers' money. It's not the governing party's money; it's everybody's money. We have to kick and scream to get it. This is making it even

worse. So that part of the legislation has to be drastically amended or killed. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: We understand that Bill 75 has provided an opportunity for the opposition parties to talk about the price points of energy today in the province of Ontario, but I'm not sure they are clearly articulating exactly what has contributed to where we are today. What we do know is that about 5,000 kilometres of transmission capacity in the province of Ontario has been upgraded, and I can tell the people in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan that the long-awaited upgrades to the east-west tie line are one of those projects that are being moved forward as we speak. People have been asking for that tie line to be upgraded for decades.

Most of the costs associated with energy pricing in the province of Ontario today are related to new generation and related to transmission infrastructure upgrades, two things that were completely ignored by both opposition parties when they had the opportunity to govern in the province of Ontario.

We know—it's just been released once again—the new Conservative position. The official opposition, in their white paper, are moving forward once again with their failed privatization experiment. They did it in 2002. We know what happened then. Prices in the province of Ontario went through the roof and the long-term debt immediately spiked, and that is still on the backs of every taxpayer in the province of Ontario today. We're paying it down. We're on track, I think, to have that eliminated within the next five or six years.

We also know that when the third party had the opportunity to govern, electricity prices in the province of Ontario went up by 40% in five years, and for that we received nothing: no investment in new generation, no investment in transmission upgrades. In fact, they went the opposite way. They cancelled the Conawapa project in Manitoba that would have brought in a 20-year contract that had been signed by a Liberal government under Lyn McLeod, a cheap green energy source. The largest transmission infrastructure project in decades would have happened and we would have had a 20-year supply at 40 cents. It was cancelled by the New Democrats—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand up in response to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane's comments because so much of what he was saying is spot on. In fact, you'd almost think he was a Conservative from some of his comments.

There's a lack of oversight by the Liberal government today, Speaker, and I totally agree that we need an independent body to provide the oversight. Based on what we've seen, what we've experienced and where we're going, we're going to need a lot of oversight, because, as the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane pointed out, the Green Energy Act is going to be an

absolute mess. It's wreaking havoc within our communities across Ontario. As the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane said, it was a travesty that our local autonomy was totally disregarded when the municipal voice was stripped away from planning proper energy approaches.

I find it also interesting to note that the amalgamation of OPA and OEB was actually suggested because, from our perspective, OPA would be totally gone. They've been nothing but an added layer of bureaucracy that is absolutely not needed, and removing it completely from the mix is the only proper step forward. We have to get our costs under control.

I have three brothers-in-law who are dairy farmers, and they would concur. In fact, just this past weekend, one of my brothers-in-law from Turnberry township mentioned that his cost in terms of running his dairy auction has gone up another third, and it's just ridiculous.

We're not just hearing that from farmers across the countryside. I actually had a letter from Westcast Industries, a manifold manufacturing company, who are very concerned about their energy costs.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, this bill really does not do anything to resolve the issue of the day. We need to bring down energy costs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is always a pleasure to hear my co-worker from Timiskaming–Cochrane talk about any issue, but this issue in particular. I especially enjoyed the story about when the smart—or not-so-smart—meter was installed on to his farm. Do you know how many times this story has played out throughout Ontario? I could tell where the new meters had been installed. We get billed every two months where I live. Two months later, they would line up in my office because so many of those smart meters were faulty.

The process you had to go through to get them to recognize that—is it impossible for a camp where you've turned the breaker off to have a \$5,000 bill for two months? Tell this to my constituent, Diane, who works at Collège Boréal, who brought in her bill. Her camp that she hadn't used, where they turn off the breaker when they leave the camp, received a bill for \$5,000. It has been a year and a half, and it is not settled yet.

I'm glad that my co-worker was able to get through. For some of them, we had some success; we were able to get through. But for some of them, the amount was astronomical—an \$18,000 bill. I will always remember. He's a constituent of mine and lives close to the office. He's in his early 80s; still walks and everything, and still can read. When he put that bill down on my desk, I fell off my chair. We were able to fight that one.

The smart meters are not so smart, and I'm glad my colleague could bring that forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: If passed—and we hope that this Bill 75 is passed—we would be creating one agency

responsible for market operations as a distinct function from procurement and contract management functions, provide opportunities to increase contract efficiency while not impeding the fairness and transparency embedded in the market rules, streamline the system to reduce the administrative burden on local electricity distributors, and be creating an electricity system that's more responsive to changing conditions.

We've heard a lot about what has happened in the electricity system in the last few years. What I, of course, am very fond of talking about is that we are almost out of coal—95% out. We will be out completely in 2014 as the parts per million in carbon go over 400 parts per million, an area that is extremely dangerous for the future of this planet and for the environment that we know and we love.

We're still fighting the battles of the smart meters. That was a tremendous undertaking. It's a platform that we need to manage our use, to encourage conservation—I would think the third party should be interested in conservation. It lets families see what their usage is. We want to go forward to do better planning and do better management of our electricity system. This is now all installed.

I must say that of the 40,000 users in Orléans, I have not had one comment in my office in the last year on smart meters. I have not. This was a difficult undertaking, a huge undertaking, but it's probably the best thing we've done from a point of view of conservation, getting people to understand electricity.

This is great—saving this \$25 million; getting the planning all together. I hope everyone supports this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane has two minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to thank the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Huron–Bruce, Nickel Belt and Ottawa–Orléans for their comments on my comments.

For the member from Ottawa–Orléans, that must just show one of the differences between Ottawa and northern Ontario, because we have a lot of troubles with smart meters. I'm just happy that mine, for some reason, turned the other way, because that's the only—when I owed \$5,000: "I'm sorry, sir; there's nothing we can do. We could just split it up over three months." You know what? I didn't have the \$5,000. I ran a business, but I didn't have \$5,000. There was nothing they could do. But when I called back, I said, "Excuse me, but I have this \$12,000 credit." All of a sudden, they looked into it.

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For those people who come to my office and people who come to France's office, I really have sympathy for them, because it's a really bad feeling when—"I'm sorry, sir. I know it's \$5,000 higher, but did you check your air conditioner?" The worst, most inefficient air conditioner in the world can't use \$5,000 of electricity in three months—and I don't have an air conditioner.

As far as what happened 20 years ago, let's talk about what's happening today. Let's talk about why this bill is

taking away public scrutiny from electrical planning when we know—look at the problems we've had when we take public scrutiny from air ambulance, when we take public scrutiny from anything, and yet here the government is putting forward a bill with—we're going to save a few bucks, supposedly, which maybe they might. On the flip side, we're going to take away the last few vestiges of public scrutiny we have in the energy sector. Let's talk about that. Let's not talk about what happened 20 years ago; let's talk about what's really happening today with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act.

Before I get into it, I just want to comment on the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane. Smart meters: I've got stacks of inquiries like that. There are so many going in that it's months before they get answers because the level of complaints is so high. If you don't want to believe us on some things, at least believe us on that, and look into it. It's a big, big problem, and it's hurting people who can't afford to pay their bills.

Anyway, back to Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act. The bill will amend the Electricity Act to allow for the merger of the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority to form the Ontario Electricity System Operator, or OESO—a long thing, but just in case anybody is watching at home, we thought we should do this preliminary. Anyway, it would look after both market and procurement functions.

The bill claims the merger will save \$25 million. Even if that were true, which I strongly doubt because the Liberals throw out figures that aren't true continuously, it's really quite a drop in the ocean compared to the overall costs of the Ontario energy sector.

We believe that the Ontario Power Authority should not be merged; it should be scrapped altogether, and we said that all through the campaign last year. It was formed seven years ago as a 15-person transitional body created by this government to manage Ontario's energy supply.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: How big is it now?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Just about every other board and agency that this government has set up—a Frankenstein monster was created. Today, this transitional board, as my colleague from Huron–Bruce asked, is now a 235-person permanent entity, with 87 people earning in excess of \$100,000, while the CEO is paid over \$570,000.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Shameful.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's ridiculous. In just seven years, it has burned through over \$375 million in expenditures and its annual expenses have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today—figures that just blow your mind.

This legislation actually is going to further erode the transparency in government. It puts more power in the hands of the minister and puts him and his closely guarded agency above scrutiny. Do the names Samsung and Ornge ring a bell here?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Oh, yes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Oh, yes.

While we're on the subject of transparency, when are we going to get the full cost of that politically motivated cancellation of the Mississauga power plant? I know it was a nice gesture to do so you could save four Liberal seats—or how about even the cost of the Oakville plant to save another seat?

This bill does not address the major problems which Ontario is facing with regard to its electricity sector. We've all heard of the spiralling costs of energy in Ontario. It has driven hundreds of businesses out of the province looking for more competitive energy rates. These companies have thus taken thousands of jobs with them. They don't use as much electricity either, so I guess that's why our electricity use is down. You only have to look at the mill closures across northern Ontario to see the seriousness of this situation. They can't compete with the lower energy costs that are available to them in Quebec, Manitoba or the USA. For average hard-working Ontarians, hydro bills have become this albatross around their necks as they struggle just to make ends meet during these difficult economic times.

As I've said on many occasions, even I think this morning or yesterday in the Legislature, the number one thing that comes into my constituency office is countless calls, emails, letters and visits from residents who are desperate. They're struggling to keep the OPG wolves away and keep the lights on. However, in many cases, while they're just trying to buy food or clothes, some of them can't even stay in their houses—they're having to sell their houses—and that's certainly from a lot of seniors who just can't afford the price of this. I think that's disgraceful.

Since 2003, energy costs have doubled, and the costs are projected to rise another 46% by 2014—outrageous.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Unaffordable. People won't be able to live.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. This government is hell-bent for leather to continue this proliferation of obscenely expensive wind and solar plants despite universal local opposition from individuals and municipalities, and the Premier and the Minister of Energy don't seem to want to listen. My colleague from Huron-Bruce was up for an open house for WPD in the south part of the city of Kawartha Lakes in my riding, where over 600 residents came out to protest against the wind developments.

One of those developments is actually going to be in the Oak Ridges moraine. There is absolutely no sense to this. I wrote to the Minister of Energy, who is here in the Legislature, on July 2. A proposed wind turbine on the Oak Ridges moraine? I mean, we're against all the wind turbines that the communities do not want, because the municipalities were not consulted, but just look at the one

in the Oak Ridges moraine for a minute. Are you really going to put an industrial wind turbine on the Oak Ridges moraine, a protected area? It makes absolutely no sense at all.

I know the government has adjusted to say that any of the projects going forward would have to have municipal authority, but what about the ones that are already in the pipe? What about the ones that don't even make sense, the ones I just mentioned on the Oak Ridges moraine that we're fighting? We're fighting all of them, but really just commenting on this one that's proposed for the Oak Ridges moraine right now.

The government dismisses out of hand these poor people who have real concerns that have surfaced. If you are having health effects—even the federal government has asked for a study. But having health effects and saying, “Put a moratorium on it until the studies are done”—you won't even accept that from us over here. The federal government is going ahead and doing that. You just dismiss those people like there are no ill health effects. You're dismissing them like it doesn't matter to you, and I think that's just unacceptable in this province.

There are 15 proposed wind turbines just in the city of Kawartha Lakes alone in my area, some near residences and some near schools. This green agenda they want to keep driving ahead—I remember when George Smitherman stood up and said this Green Energy Act wouldn't increase your bill by 1%. That classic moment in the Ontario Legislature: not by 1%. I'm sure it's on tape somewhere—all his motions.

But when we bring these topics up to the Minister of Energy again and again, he just dismisses them out of hand, saying that the PC Party is in favour of coal power. Mr. Speaker, all the parties have been on the record saying, “Close the coal-fired plants.” They campaigned on that in 2003 for a date of 2007—whatever. They changed the date for the closure of the coal plants four times—four times—but they tend to forget that when he gets up with his mantra, “The PCs want dirty coal.” Mantra, mantra, mantra. Real people, real problems: He doesn't want to listen to it. And it was the Conservative government that first ordered the coal-powered plants to be shut down.

Mr. John O'Toole: We were honest about it. We said 2014; they said 2007.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, absolutely. They've changed the date. They spin things. The McGuinty government would tell you that wind and solar have replaced coal in Ontario, another fairy tale. Coal accounted for 24.7% of total power in 2002, and now it's 2.7%. The reduction in coal has been the direct result of an increase in nuclear and gas-fired energy. It has nothing whatsoever to do with wind and solar.

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I'd like to quote my colleague from Nipissing, from his remarks on May 8: “When you toss around phrases like ‘dirty coal,’ which stifles naysayers; and put a green label on it ... you've got a perfect storm for procedural abuses, failed fiscal oversight and a gross misuse of

taxpayer dollars,” which is what they’re finally saying, that the OPA is ineffective and costly—but it’s a long way to come. But the Minister of Energy would also have us to believe there’s a mad dash to wind and solar energy that has created an abundance of jobs. I say, jobs on what planet? They’re not here. They throw out numbers that are not substantiated at all.

Interjection: Industry people agree with you.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. In the Auditor General’s report for 2011, he stated that in other jurisdictions that have tried to go this route, for every job created through green energy projects, between “two and four jobs are ... lost in other sectors of the economy because of higher electricity prices.” Well, that’s what we’re seeing in Ontario. They might not want to see it, but that is what is occurring in the province of Ontario.

In Ontario, wind and solar energy is not always there when you need it. The wind has got to blow and the sun has got to shine. Consequently, you need backup energy sources that are required to maintain a steady, reliable output. Again, the Auditor General’s report goes on to say, “According to the study used by the ministry and the OPA, 10,000 megawatts of electricity from wind would require an additional 47% of non-wind power, typically produced by natural-gas-fired generation plants, to ensure continuous supply.”

Although they’re faintly attempting to say the OPA is working, merging is not going to solve the problems that we need to get solved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O’Toole: I listened intently to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, and I always like the way she frames things in terms of, “I think of what the government’s policies are doing to families.”

When I think of it myself, I think her point was well taken when she used the barometer of the reduction in coal, the whole argument about who would close the coal plants that produce carbon dioxide emissions. She came up with a very informative number, which was that at one point coal represented about 24%, 25% of the generation of electricity fuel usage, to produce electricity, and now it’s down to, I think she said, 2%. Well, I don’t attribute it to their policies. I attribute it to their failure in the economy, because really, if you look, coal is used or was used as a source of peaking power. When you ramp up your generation, you use coal. Now, what happened is, the economy has moved slowly down until there’s about half a million people or more, and families, out of work. That’s really what happens. And when the economy goes down, the energy that’s required at those peaking times, when coal, and pulp and paper—and when steel and automobiles are being produced, they need this extra energy. Now they’re not using the coal anymore because there’s no economy. The industrial economy has moved out of Ontario. That’s the real statement about this policy.

This Bill 75, as has been said before, forms a new bureaucracy, much like the LHINs. It’s a super-bureau-

cracy of electrical experts, the OPA and the IESO, and it’s just not the right thing to do at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting to listen to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock speak about what this bill will mean to her and to her constituency, and she makes a lot of good points. I mean, she talks about how the amount of money in the growth in those bureaucracies is rather phenomenal. When she quotes numbers that an agency goes from a budget of \$14 million to a budget of \$76.4 million, when she quotes salaries of CEOs that are \$570,000 a year, when she quotes about an agency that now has 237 employees, and the list goes on and on, we all know what bureaucracy means. It means a lot of money. And at the end of the day, who is stuck with the bill? Well, it’s the 13.5 million people who live in Ontario that pay for all of this.

Is there a need to streamline that bureaucracy? Absolutely. It should never have been conceived in the first place, I would tell you. But now that it’s there, should we streamline the bureaucracy? Absolutely. There are major savings to be had there.

But then comes the poison pill. They will be willing to streamline the bureaucracy so far, bring them under an umbrella, but they will take away the citizens’ right to have input into the power plan. This is completely wrong. Have they not heard what’s going on in Ontario? Have you not gone to any rural Ontario communities? Those people are screaming to the point where they’re hoarse, but nobody listens. Nobody listens to what they have to say. You cannot move forward when you leave behind the voice of so many people. People need to be heard. This bill will go backward—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thanks to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. A couple of pieces I need to address, though, in her comments.

She said that since we’ve come to government in 2003, energy costs have gone up by X—I think she said doubled or tripled or something. What the Conservatives don’t tell you about where we are today compared to where we were in 2003 is that when they were in government, they had artificially capped the price of electricity that appeared on your hydro bill. It was a political football that they didn’t want to deal with, so they artificially capped the cost of electricity that showed up on your hydro bill. And what were they doing with that other piece? You weren’t paying it on your hydro bill. It got transferred to your tax bill in terms of the long-term debt. So when she says it’s gone from here to here, what she’s not telling you is that the starting point in 2003 actually should have been five or six cents a kilowatt hour, but they wouldn’t deal with it, just like they didn’t deal with transmission, just like they didn’t deal with generation. She ignored it; their party ignored it. Now, it may have been before she was here, but the truth of it is that when we came in, the ceiling should have been

higher already, but they capped it artificially because they didn't want to deal with the issue. That is a fact, plain and simple.

The other mistake she continues to make is linking hydro costs to the loss of forestry jobs in northern Ontario: another complete misnomer. I've offered to debate that with anybody, any time, including the former leader of the third party, Howard Hampton; he never showed up. I still have that standing offer in terms of that false connection to the loss of forestry jobs. I'm still happy to do that any time anybody wants.

Speaker, as we stand here today, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate program will make AbiBow, now Resolute Forest Products, in my riding, along with \$10 million from our government for a cogen facility there, the lowest-cost large pulp and paper mill not only in their fleet but I think perhaps—and I could be wrong; it could be checked—in Canada, but certainly in their entire fleet here in Ontario compared to Quebec.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to dive into this debate today with my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. As always, she has done a tremendous job outlining her concerns for her constituents, which she has consistently done since 2003. She's done a fantastic job, and she has been able to clearly articulate the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party's and our caucus's concern with this government and its handling of the energy files since they've been in office over this past dark—very dark—decade.

Now, I can't help but comment to the previous Speaker from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, I believe. Yes, that's the right riding name. You know, he wants to debate anyone, any time, anywhere. Well, that's what we're doing. I don't know if he is aware of that, but that's actually what we're doing right now. We're having a debate. And I can tell him from having spoken to many of our party members in the north, particularly the king of the north, our very own Vic Fedeli from North Bay—he has told me that the impact of the global adjustment and the energy plan that this government has brought in has forced jobs out of the north.

But don't think it's just happening in the north, Speaker. I can tell you in my own Nepean–Carleton riding, I've been to Bells Corners—in fact, I took Vic Fedeli to Bells Corners—where I talked to business owners who told me very clearly that this summer they couldn't hire summer students because the cost of hydro became too expensive. I talked to seniors this summer who are telling me that they couldn't put air conditioning on and in the winter they're concerned about putting their heating on. Why? Because our energy bills in this province are far too high; they're not affordable. If that member wants to debate any member on this side, I can tell him we're game on. That's why we're here; that's what we're doing. We'll meet you anywhere you want to debate, and we'll win it.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to thank the members from Oshawa, Nickel Belt, Thunder Bay–Atikokan and Nepean–Carleton for their comments.

When we campaigned—I gave you the figures of how much the OPA has cost the people of Ontario—we said it should be scrapped. It kind of blows you away, the figures that have gone through. It's burned through \$375 million in expenditures, and annual expenses have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today, under your government.

And if you think that high energy prices aren't driving businesses out of Ontario, if you don't think that that occurs, you are sadly mistaken. Please go to businesses in your riding. You can't say that it's making them competitive; it is not. It is driving businesses out of the province of Ontario. There are tons of examples. If the member hasn't heard enough in all the debate that has gone on in this Legislature to prove that, then maybe he should read Hansard at bedtime.

This is somewhat of an admission, as the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said earlier—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't need sarcasm, and the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan knows he's out of line—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I am correct.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Your last warning.

Continue.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm so glad that the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan is so engaged, and there'll be more speakers up shortly, right till 6 o'clock, and he can engage with them.

But, really, even Don Drummond, your own hand-picked consultant, tried to explain to you that the link between electricity prices and economic performance requires us to review the energy policy in this province of Ontario.

This bill is a small step. It certainly does not go far enough. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm out of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act. We've heard from many of my colleagues in this House, and I want to add to their discussions my concerns and all of our concerns on this bill.

This proposed legislation is designed to implement the merger of the Ontario Power Authority, the OPA, and the Independent Electricity System Operator, the IESO. The government is also making wholesale changes to energy planning and procurement.

While we support the consolidation of Ontario's fragmented hydro agency system and agree with the government's intention to reduce waste and elimination by merging the two agencies, we still have some concerns with the approach of this bill. The way they've gone about doing this is Bill 75 removes the independent planning and review required by the present supply planning regime. This is something that the NDP does not support.

Although the merger to form the Ontario Electricity System Operator may be a positive step, we in the NDP feel strongly that by eliminating the current integrated power system plan, the opportunity for public and stakeholder participation in energy planning is greatly reduced. We heard from the Minister of Energy, in their presentation about what their bill will do, but they failed to outline that this bill will exclude the public's ability to scrutinize power planning in Ontario.

As MPPs, we legislate and are accountable to our constituents, to the public, but it appears that the Liberal government continues their effort to shut out the public from this and many other debates. Unfortunately, this seems to be commonplace—a government who keeps acting as though they have a majority mandate from the public, when they don't, as they currently do not—creates legislation making it difficult for the public to partake in the decision and with no accountability or oversight. This is what they would like.

Yesterday my colleague the member from Toronto-Danforth explained to the House that in the past, to assess the power plans for Ontario, one needed an environmental assessment. Something wasn't acted on. To me, this seems as though it would be extremely helpful. You would think it would be common sense, before moving ahead with any projects, that speaking to individuals affected, consulting with experts, doing background research and presenting the facts to the decision-makers would be highly beneficial, not to mention that it gives us the knowledge to make the right decisions with all the right facts. For a plan this large, for the amalgamation of something of this importance, the NDP believes that such consultation should absolutely be required. This bill diminishes the extent to which we assess power planning in Ontario. Yet again, it gives the minister more power to determine the parameters of the question for the OEB. We know, from many clear examples this year, what happens when you give ministers more power to shut out the public.

The bill removes OPA's power and duty to develop an integrated power system plan for approval by the Ontario Energy Board and the OEB's power and duty to review the plan for economic prudence, cost-effectiveness and regulatory compliance. They want to replace the integrated power system with ministerial energy plans. The minister must consult with the OEB and refer the plan to the OEB, but we have completely lost the step in which the independent review is undertaken. In this set-up, stakeholders lose the ability to test, in a proceeding before the OEB, the government's energy procurement plans and the consequent effect of those plans on rates.

I'm no expert on energy cost-effectiveness or energy plans, but that's exactly why I see the value in having these independent reviews and assessments—something that isn't in this bill but will become more of an issue over the next few months with the consolidation of the power companies and energy service providers and local distribution companies. We will hear more about this when the minister's panel reports back to us. But again, it is not mentioned in this bill.

In Algoma-Manitoulin, what does this mean for small or rural communities like Chapleau, who have their own local power company? Will they be forced to amalgamate with one of the larger northern cities? What will this look like in terms of good jobs in northern rural communities? I don't know the answers, and I am sure that you may not know either. But again, that's another reason why we should be including all of our stakeholders in this decision.

Recently I have met with a company in my riding who have a reusable energy project they have been trying to move forward. They have been trying to set up a meeting with the minister about their project. What will happen to these projects in a larger system that removes the public and stakeholders from the table? How will they know what the numbers are? Whether we are investing in new energy or spending millions in nuclear, some of these folks may have some great ideas, ones that could save us money and be better for our environment. But with this bill, we will never know. "Do we care? We know best." That's the attitude this government has.

I can't agree with this government on this one. We may not like all those meetings. Some of those ideas may be far-fetched and probably are, but we owe it to the Ontario taxpayers to investigate at great length and protect our plans or even look at alternatives to what is going to cost us billions of dollars. If we could do things right the first time—yes, it could take longer if we do our background work, if we do the research and ask all the questions, not just the ones we want to ask. Then, together, we can make the right decisions for stakeholders and the public.

I'm sure that all of us here, and more specifically this government, want to avoid being called to testify in another committee or spend hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars on inquiries due to lack of oversight by ministers or ministries. We don't want to make poor decisions again and again just because we don't want to do the job right the first time. We can avoid all this and likely save time and money in the long run. So can we all agree, just this one time, to get it done at the beginning, the first time?

1640

While we all have critic portfolios on which we all are supposed to be the lead or expert in our area, I find it impossible that anyone in this Legislature can really, truly have the knowledge of the collective, the more wholesome, all-encompassing knowledge we gain when we are all included in the discussion, when we reach out and ask people for their opinions and their concerns.

You know, I'm a father of two lovely young boys—actually, two very big boys—who use a lot of hydro, by the way.

Interjection: They take a lot of showers.

Mr. Michael Mantha: You wouldn't believe the amount of time they spend in the shower.

You know, they've made mistakes, but they've made mistakes under my eyes, and I've watched them over the years. I'm a very patient father, a very loving father. But I let them make their mistakes. They learn from those mistakes, and I want them to learn from those mistakes.

But we're all elected here. We're all adults. We're all professionals sent here by our constituents to do the right thing, to make the right decisions, to take the time to study what needs to be studied, to analyze, to question, to challenge ourselves to get it right, because we have a lot of people looking at us to make sure we're getting it right.

I think we can all agree that this government has made mistakes—substantial ones—and I think it's about time that this government starts learning from those mistakes. Let's do it right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his comments. The bill, of course, is about trying to achieve some more cost savings in the energy sector. I remind people, especially northerners, about two significant pieces we have already brought forward that help on the bill they see in their homes every month or every two months. The Ontario clean energy benefit takes 10% off the bottom line of your energy bill every time it arrives at your home—fully 10%. That's been in effect for about a year and a half now. And for northerners only, the northern Ontario energy tax credit is income-based for a single person who has a primary residence up to a maximum of \$130, and for a couple up to a maximum of \$200. So there are some significant pieces in place as well as on the industrial side, which I spoke to earlier.

Speaker, I just want to make one point in the brief, little time I have this afternoon. When the conversation continually points to the price of energy and the job situation in the province of Ontario, I ask people to simply respond to one question: Why would Cliffs Natural Resources, which represents the largest potential mining find in the last 100 years in the province of Ontario, make a decision to locate in Ontario a smelter that is, as explained to me, the largest energy user you can find in the industrial world? Apparently, they use just a tremendous amount of energy, and yet Cliffs has made the decision to locate their smelter in Ontario. We heard before they made the decision that it was not going to happen, it was going to Quebec, it was going to Manitoba. They've announced they are locating it here.

So when people want to talk about jobs related to energy pricing, they need only to stand, look in the camera and explain, especially for northerners, how it is that the largest industrial appliance, a smelter, is going to

be built in Ontario and create 450 jobs during construction and 450 jobs during operation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I believe the member from Algoma-Manitoulin spoke with some insight, coming from the north, and spoke in a very practical way about this large bureaucracy that's being created. I think it's a bit of a distraction by the member from the Liberal side there—what's his riding? Anyway, I believe he tried to get off topic a bit by deflecting it.

He should talk directly about the bill, because really, in all honesty, it's creating another layer of bureaucracy. Members should read section 25—most of the bill is section 25. This new board that's being appointed—these people are going to be Liberal insiders.

What are they actually doing? If you look at section 25, the OESO, which it's going to be called, “may establish and charge fees to recover ...” and it goes on to a list.

Now, “fees” is the new codified word for tax. They don't refer to it as a charge. It's a tax. There are several sections: “May recover costs of procurement contracts”—fees “Board deemed to approve recovery”—fees. “May” be audited—not “shall” be audited; “may” be audited. And “The OESO shall submit to the minister such reports and information” as required.

So it's their gang of appointees that is going to be charging more money when the system itself right now is in chaos. If you look at it in a functional way—and, Mike, you know this—they've got the whole system completely screwed up. Basically they've got the generation, this new—I should say that the power bill itself is a mystery. Now this company, Cliffs Resources, is not going to pay the regular fee. They're not going to be paying the global adjustment. They'll have two fees for their friends. Now that may, in policy, be the right thing, but this bill, which we should address, is dealing with a new bureaucracy which charges more money for everything.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to my colleague the member from Algoma-Manitoulin explain his view of what he thinks Bill 75 will do, and I must say that I agree with everything he said. I'm not sure that I can help him with the problem of his two boys in the shower. I myself experienced the same problem when they were growing up. All I can tell you is, eventually they grow out of long showers. It just takes a number of months, sometimes years before this process has run its course. Just be patient; they will grow up.

But on a more serious note, he talks about some of the stakeholders who wanted to get into green energy. This is an issue that happens throughout my riding, where we have vast areas of unorganized land. We also have 33 little communities in Nickel Belt where people would be interested in participating in green energy, but they can't connect to the grid.

I can give you the example of the church in Capreol. Capreol is better known as the home of Eli Martel, who is well known around here. The church in Capreol was very interested in putting solar panels on its roof and participating in green energy. They happen to be facing due south. The structure was there. They certainly had the manpower because they have a lot of their congregation who have trades who could have helped out. But then we found out that although they qualify for everything, they can't connect to the grid, so it's all for none. So I agree with what my colleague has said: There's room for improvement. Let's get this right the first time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's always a pleasure to follow my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin. Whether I agree with him or not, I do admire the way in which he does the debate. It's a good example around here, where sometimes it gets a little bit heated. As we seem to be discussing the propensity of his two boys to take hot showers, I've just got to weigh in with one more thing: It beats the alternative.

A lot of what's going on here is a means of fixing a mess inherited by a failed attempt by the Conservatives to take apart Ontario Hydro and break it up into a bunch of little pieces. And we ended up in Ontario with the worst of both worlds. It didn't privatize things, and we ended up with this mishmash of different agencies.

Now what this particular legislation does is, it puts together two particular agencies, the Ontario Power Authority with the Independent Electricity System Operator. The whole idea is to create a single efficient organization, and the bottom line here is that it's going to save consumers about \$25 million each year.

This is where I think we should be going—and if my colleagues over on the Conservative side tend to be vociferous about it, it's because they have no plan. If you have no plan, the first thing you do is you fire the planners, and that's exactly what they're proposing here. They say, "Scrap the whole lot," and they're simply firing the planners.

1650

If you've got as complex and as detailed an electricity system as Ontario does, you've got to have some degree of planning in here. But it makes a lot of sense to bring together both the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator, all under the same roof, and that's really all this thing does: It saves the taxpayer 25 million bucks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to thank the members from Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Durham, Nickel Belt and Mississauga-Streetsville for their comments on my comments that I had earlier. I'm glad you guys share my concerns that I have with my two boys. I have some good news. They've grown up quite quickly. They're going to

be going to college, and then they're going to become somebody else's problem.

Interjection: Dream on, Michael.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, I know. The problem becomes more expensive, that's all. I think we're going to be talking about tuition on the next question when I talk about my boys.

Anyway, the point that I wanted to stress is—it may have been heard just a little bit, and that was getting this right; getting this decision that we're looking at right, and making it right, and not just part right but all of it right. We can do that.

I just want to allude to the member from Thunder Bay, who talked about the successes and the great things that are going to be happening in the Ring of Fire. There's another instance where we're not doing it right from the beginning. We're not talking to all of our stakeholders, particularly the biggest stakeholders there, which are our First Nations in that area. We're talking to some, but we're not doing it right. We're doing it in reverse. We're making an announcement; then we're consulting with them. That is not doing it right.

To the member from Durham: Although I'm very happy that he agreed with some of my comments, privatizing our hydro system is not doing it right. We need to have the proper consultation in order to get this right. That's what I was trying to stress in my comments that I was making.

Eliminating the scrutiny that we can have through this process is not doing it right. Keeping the public and our stakeholders from being involved in this process is not doing it right. We can do it right. Let's get it right this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, you said that with such enthusiasm that I'm hoping you're going to listen intently to what I have to say today.

I'm pleased to be joining the debate today on Bill 75, which is the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act. One of the things, when I was a university professor, that I didn't like so much when I was reading students' reports was to listen to all these acronyms: OPA, IESO—we can talk about all of them in energy; there seems to be a lot of them. In a sense, we're getting rid of a couple and starting a new one, which is the OESO. I'm not sure if we're supposed to phonetically pronounce that or not, but we shall soon see.

During debate today, I remember listening quite fondly to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, who had an appreciation for force fields. I don't know if Star Trek had a force field, or Superman, but we certainly were engaged in a discussion of paranormal forces, and certainly that's interesting with respect to that.

But he stated something else when he was trying to make a metaphor there, and that was that the OPA is seen to be a force field, something that the Liberal government hides behind whenever they have a problem with the Ministry of Energy. When he said that, I took immediate

notice of some of the work that we were doing when we were in the estimates committee.

In the estimates committee, we had the Ministry of Energy and the Minister of Energy before us for 15 hours. We also had a procedural motion—several procedural motions—which we spent more than seven hours debating. So we talked about, in estimates, the Ministry of Energy for more than 20 hours, probably approaching 25 hours, to get to the bottom of what's happened in that ministry. Certainly, in the course of doing our work in that committee, we were able to extract some information but not all.

I remember, during the work at committee—we had two motions that we were debating—we asked the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority to release documents—all the documents, in fact—for the Oakville and Mississauga power plants and the moving of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants. The question that I have, Mr. Speaker, is, what would happen and how would that have proceeded if Bill 75 had been passed before we met at estimates? Would they have acted in the same way, or would they have acted differently? Would they have given us the documents at our disposal, or would they not have?

I'm very interested in this conversation because certainly, in the course of doing the estimates and trying to extract the information, we received a letter from the Ontario Power Authority and a letter—

Mr. Bob Delaney: You are not talking about the bill.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm talking about what would happen if the two had been merged prior to meeting at estimates, which is exactly relevant to the bill at hand because we have that here.

I notice that we have two letters here, one that's dated on May 30, the other dated on May 30—one from the Ontario Power Authority and one from the Ministry of Energy. I note with great interest that both of them have similar language. Let's hear them. On the 30th this is to the member for Beaches–East York: "I respect the authority of the committee and its interest in receiving this information," said the Minister of Energy. The Ontario Power Authority, at the same time, suggests that, "The OPA respects the authority of the committee and its interest in receiving this information." It's almost word for word. It seems like these organizations that are supposed to be at arm's length to the government actually are joined at the hip. They're saying the same things.

I'm very curious to know, when we see the two organizations merge, if we're going to see the same sort of thing; if they continue to be joined at the hip. It's an important question that we've asked. Certainly all the documents that we've requested haven't been brought forward in a timely manner. As you know, certainly we've asked the Speaker to rule on a point of privilege in terms of getting those documents to us.

With respect to the actual merging of the two bodies, it seems interesting that there's a conversion of sorts; that the Liberals now feel they should have less bureaucracy in the province of Ontario. That's a good thing. I

welcome the fact that they have woken up to the reality that the bureaucracy is getting too big and that we have to come up with ways of reducing it. Of course, it doesn't go nearly as far as what we would have liked to see. We have been advocating for the abolition of the Ontario Power Authority since before the last election. That's where we continue to stand. Let's get rid of some of these layers of bureaucracy rather than merge them.

We believe that the Ontario Power Authority should not be merged; it should be scrapped altogether. One of the reasons for that is that it was supposed to be a transitional body, a body that was supposed to have about a dozen people. It has turned into a monstrosity of a bureaucracy. Today, rather than having the 15 people that it was originally slated to have, it's a bureaucracy, a 235-person permanent entity, where 87 people—87 people, Mr. Speaker—earn over \$100,000 and the CEO earns over \$570,000. That's a lot of money for a transitional agency.

That is at the crux of what's happening in the province of Ontario. We have always been advocating for restraint in government spending. We know that the credit rating agencies are demanding it. We notice that the government seems to want to move down that path. But if we're really serious about reining in government spending, let's talk about the costs that this would save. Over the last seven years, the expenditures of the OPA have been over \$375 million. Its expenses have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today. That's the growth.

There was a concept that we talked about in public administration when I was teaching. It's called self-absorption. Self-absorption is a concept whereby the folks that are working in a bureaucracy tend to be self-fulfilling. They're more interested in growing their own organization before putting the interests of public service first.

1700

One of the reasons why we have set up our democratic system the way we have is to combat self-absorption, to correct the problem that bureaucracies are self-fulfilling, that they're self-absorbed, that they always seek to grow, and one way we can do that is by eliminating the OPA.

Interjection: Good advice.

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, I think it's good advice too, and certainly there has been a lot of need. This is an important time in the province of Ontario. We face a fiscal crisis of epic proportions where we have a \$15-billion deficit, and if we don't change course, that deficit number is going to double. That debt that we have in the province of Ontario, currently standing at about \$264 billion, will go up to \$411 billion, as Don Drummond states. If we aren't going to address our fiscal crisis, if we aren't going to rein in government spending, if we aren't going to show that restraint that's badly needed here in the province of Ontario, we are heading down the wrong path. We need that change, and we need it soon.

Before I conclude, Mr. Speaker—as I notice I don't have very much time left—I do want to touch upon some of the things that other members have stated with respect

to their constituents' concerns in the Ministry of Energy. The reason I want to bring these up is because they're important. This is what our constituents are saying day by day.

We've heard today about smart meters. Smart meters are certainly an interesting topic. I have a nurse in my riding who works the afternoon shift. When is she going to be using most of her energy consumption? When the prices of energy are too high. She has complained that she's been negatively affected by smart meter pricing and time-of-use pricing simply as a result of her employment. She can't change that. It's part of what she does. Now, I feel for her. She's a person working hard, trying to provide for herself and her family, who has been negatively affected by a decision just because of the shift that she happens to work at that hospital.

I also have a meat packing facility in the city of Cambridge, the township of North Dumfries, actually, that has had to close because of the excessive energy costs. Cambridge Meat Packers is one of those organizations that have closed, not employing the 55 people that it once did, because the competition with other provinces and other jurisdictions has lower energy prices putting them out of business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Cambridge. I agree with some of the things he said, and I really appreciate the reasoning behind his arguments. But one thing—and there were some comments from the other side that the beginning of his argument had nothing to do with the bill. In fact, it had everything to do with the bill. Because what this bill is trying to do—it's trying to save a little bit of money, but what it's really trying to do is make it even harder to get information regarding the government's energy plans. And not just this. If it's passed, it will be regardless of who is in government in the future, because government also seems to have a tendency to get more secretive as it moves along, and that's what this bill is kind of doing. Look how much trouble they had at the estimates committee trying to get some information, and by the member from Cambridge's comments, they didn't get it all. That was with the current legislation. With this proposed legislation, there will be one less step in public hearings, because now instead of the IPSP, we will have ministerial energy plans. So, you know, we're not sure that's the way to be going. We should be going with more transparency, not less.

As far as bureaucracies being not only self-sustaining but growing like—

Mr. Rob Leone: Self-absorbing.

Mr. John Vanthof: Self-absorbing. I've never heard of that theory before. But self-absorbing or growing like a tree—you know what? They probably have that.

But where I do somewhat disagree with the member from Cambridge is that I don't believe in slash and burn, just cut. We have to look at what each bureaucracy is doing, and if they're doing something significant, some-

thing worthwhile, then we have to keep the best of the best. I think that's where we differ. But as far as the one thing I think we are agreeing on on this side of the House, we have to be as transparent as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I remember watching from the other side of the Ontario-Manitoba border. When I was mayor of Winnipeg, we had a hydro utility which we were selling. This was at the time when the Harris government was downloading health and social services onto municipalities as we were uploading them in Manitoba, and I saw the huge financial impact.

But it was interesting because I remember seeing studies on the condition of transmission lines. I remember under the previous government a couple of things. Ontario then had the most under-invested-in transmission lines. The government that the member speaking right now, from Cambridge, is a part of saw the massive divestment of the quality of that. So not only were there load-bearing problems, as the member from Nickel Belt mentioned, the system was in a free fall, because it was easy to hide disinvestment in transmission lines from taxpayers and leave the bill for a future government.

The other thing they did was they absolutely collapsed the value of public hydro assets. I remember reading it because I saw a presentation by the financial officers of Canada showing that they managed to create \$8 billion in liability for the taxpayers of Ontario through collapsing and deregulation—immediately inflated an \$8-billion obligation with no capital investment—truly amazing. I am still waiting for the party opposite to actually rationalize what was arguably, from any objective third party, the most irrational, expensive, disastrous move in the history of Canadian energy policy. You have never apologized for it; you have never explained it. It is legendary. When I was mayor of Winnipeg, you were used as the textbook example in the energy field of exactly what not to do.

If you ever really want to get into this debate, as my friend from Nepean-Carleton pointed out, let's just panel some experts before the committee. Let's just panel some experts and actually look at who created the energy mess. We're creating clean, green jobs, and I cannot tell you how embarrassed you must be for the legacy that you left this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I wished that the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke was present in this debate, because he's quite a country singer and he'd be singing Here We Go Again. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you wish, I'll ask him to come around to your room and he can sing it for you. He's actually quite good. We do rib him quite a bit, but he's actually quite good.

We have advocated to get rid of the OPA for quite a while. I listened to the comments from the member from Cambridge and I can understand why they're doing this. Bureaucracy for the last nine years: That's been the

biggest growth industry in Ontario. It's not under control and it does look after itself; it keeps growing. I fully agree with the member from Cambridge's comments on that.

My wife and I have a smart meter at our place. We get along with it because we're not there early in the morning and we get home late at night. But there are too many people, especially when wintertime comes along, older people, who need the heat on. I mean, they can't sit there in the cold, waiting for the smart meter cycle to go around.

They have been a failure in Perth–Wellington. We get complaints about them all the time. As they come on the system, we're going to get more complaints—and that's hitting our most vulnerable people. It's certainly not hurting people who get out of their house early in the morning and come home later at night.

I suggested a while ago that I believe there's an award for energy producer of the year in New York. I was going to submit our energy minister's name to it. I haven't gotten that done, but I'll look into it as we go along, because I'm sure the people of New York and Quebec really appreciate our failed energy policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to get these numbers right from the member from Cambridge, because it's something that will resonate when I'm talking to constituents at the door. An organization that was supposed to have 12 to 15 grew into 255; 87 of them are at a \$100,000 salary per year, with the CEO getting \$570,000. Okay, I just wanted to get that right.

1710

Anyways, when I'm talking to my constituents when I'm walking down the street, they'd like to clearly understand what this merging, consolidation and taking out the opportunity for public input into the whole process is. Most of them—I would say most of them, not all of them. There are some very bright and good individuals all over Ontario, but this is not what they're absorbing. You know what they're absorbing? They get this nice little envelope at the end of the month or they get it on an email, and they open up their electricity bill. When they see that bill, when they come into my office and I have to deal with my own staff—we're breaking down. These people are in tears and they're wondering, "What am I going to do at the end of the month? Am I going to be sacrificing a pair of running shoes for my kid who is starting school right now or am I going to be buying my full prescription? Am I going to be buying groceries, or will I have to once again open up the door to my apartment in my apartment building so I can absorb some heat in my room?" That's what they're telling me. That's what's really happening out there.

When we're making these decisions, again I'll go back to the notes that I had—and I agree with a lot of the discussions that were talked about in here: We have to get this right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Cambridge has two minutes.

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to thank the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Minister for Training, Colleges and Universities—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There's one more two-minute, sorry. We'll revise that. The clerks' table told me there's another two-minute response.

The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I must say I really appreciate the presentation by my colleague from Cambridge. I think he has been doing a wonderful job since he came here to Queen's Park after, of course, succeeding Gerry Martiniuk, a long-time MPP here.

Now, I just want to simply say this: There have been so many new members who have spoken today, and I was just thinking how incredibly they've all done in the last year. Just before a year ago we were still into a campaign. Many of these people have just arrived here. I look at my colleagues in the third party, the government of course and our own official opposition, and the vast improvement that they've made over the year. They just really fit in. They've been doing a great job.

But I want to speak now to the issue at hand, and it is of course the Ontario Power Authority that our party has had serious reservations with—massive concerns. In fact, we wanted to scrap this public relations authority a long time ago. My colleague from Cambridge is simply suggesting that we follow through with that plan instead of amalgamating it with another electricity distributor—the OPA doesn't distribute anything or create anything; it just talks about spin lines—that we should just scrap it altogether.

We're talking about minimal savings when you're facing a \$30-billion deficit. These folks suggest they're going to save \$25 million. The government of Ontario, when it's run by the Ontario Liberal Party, never saves any money. So we don't believe in their numbers, and that's what my colleague from Cambridge is simply saying today. I want to congratulate him for being such a strong member and defending the good folks of Cambridge.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Now the member from Cambridge has two minutes.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the members for Perth–Wellington, Algoma–Manitowlin and Nepean–Carleton. I count that as five people, but thank you very much for so much enthusiasm for speaking on my speech here.

I listened intently to the remarks by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. One thing that strikes me is they've been in government for nine years—nine years. You'd think that they would actually accept that over nine years, things under their watch haven't improved very much. I haven't heard them apologize for tripling the size of our deficit. I haven't heard them apologize for doubling the size of our debt. This is nine years—nine years—and they refuse at every

given chance to take the blame for anything. It's remarkable. It's remarkable that they still are sitting here. The Minister of the Environment likes to heckle as much as he does, and I appreciate his commentary. But the reality is, nine years and they've failed to get their fiscal house in order. In fact, they've made it far worse—never an apology. Never an apology for, as the minister says, leaving the bill for future governments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You had a \$5-billion deficit in 2003.

Mr. Rob Leone: You're talking about a \$5-billion deficit when you have a \$15-billion deficit, member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You said you had a balanced budget.

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, you have a \$15-billion deficit and you don't complain about that. I don't understand. My kids are going to be paying for your mistakes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour, always a privilege to stand in this place. I think I'll pick up where my friend from Cambridge left off and perhaps really just challenge this government, using this bill to explain a few of the issues around the energy file.

First and foremost, there was a lot of crowing from the government side today about the coal plants being closed, but I've been here for a few years, not as many as some but more than many, and I remember this government promising to close all the coal plants by 2007. Here we are, almost 2013, and we're finally getting around to one. I also recall this government attempting to rationalize the energy sector from day one, truly, and yet for some reason we have the highest electricity bills in the country in the province of Ontario.

Again, my friend here from Algoma-Manitoulin actually spoke about the devastation that these high electricity bills have had on the working families, the ordinary people in Ontario. These are the people we hear from in our constituency offices. These are the seniors that didn't get much help with the home renovation tax credit but are getting hit extremely hard by this government's energy policies. There's no question about it. That's what's going on.

There are other problems too, of course, around the energy sector since this government has been in office. I heard mention of the smart meters, so-called smart meters. There's nothing much very smart about them, Mr. Speaker. In fact, for seniors, for small business people, these are simply another grab at their money, and trust me, for seniors and small business people this has been a very rough ride over the last nine years this government has been in office. This isn't helping, because they have no choice about when they are going to use energy in their businesses or in their homes. Seniors cannot be expected to do their laundry at 2 in the morning. Most seniors I know are in bed by 9. Small businesses can't open their businesses overnight if they are used to operating their businesses during the day. Again, this added tax isn't helping, and it's not saving money, in fact. It costs about \$1 billion to put those smart

meters into homes, and we're not seeing anything like that kind of return on them. Again, it's another policy that this government has brought in.

For the environmentalists out there who are concerned about where we get our energy from, our energy critic today got up and asked this government a question about nuclear energy. Fifty per cent of our energy comes from there, and this government is running wholesale into that. The problem is, you put so much money into the refurbishment of something like Darlington, you don't have money left over for other programs. Any environmentalist, from David Suzuki on through, will tell you that nuclear is not the way to go in terms of meeting our energy needs.

We often hear from them about, "How would you do it better?" We could point to an example, actually, just next door to us in a province called Manitoba, where they've actually put some money into conservation. This is the way they've done it; it's very smart: What they've done is that you can actually borrow money from the government to retrofit your house, and then you pay it back, and it's a self-revolving fund. Now, that makes sense, because I would love—I'm sure many of us would love to have solar panels on our roofs. My goodness, I'd love to have a wind turbine on my roof, but I don't have the money to do it. I don't have the money to do it, Mr. Speaker. In fact, most Ontarians I speak to don't have money to put \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 into retrofitting their house to make it greener. They just don't have that money, so they don't do it, because it means money up front for possible savings in the future. It sounds a little bit like that home renovation act again. That doesn't work either.

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Here's the situation: Why not, like they do in other jurisdictions, give us the money and we pay back the money out of our savings on energy? That's smart. That's not this administration.

If you really want to zero in on the two areas this bill has a problem with, these are they: ministerial oversight, again funnelling all this power into the minister's office—where have we seen this before? We just saw it in Bill 115; we're seeing it here yet again—and, conversely, withdrawing that oversight from the citizens of this province, from the community.

Talking about addictions to issues and to ways of doing this, this government seems to have an addiction to concentrating power in ministers' offices and withdrawing it from the transparent oversight of its citizens. We've seen them do this in a number of different files. Here, again, we see them.

This is not to say that we're not amenable to some rationalization of the energy sector. My goodness, it needs it. We have a bloated bureaucracy. We have people making too much money. Again, we're all in agreement on that. The question is the way they're doing it.

With that, I'll stop, because I'm really interested in the feedback.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Taras Natyshak): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I notice that the member finished a bit earlier than I anticipated, and I was wondering whether she had the answer to why the NDP government of the day cancelled the potential contract for Conawapa, which is the power coming in from Manitoba.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A single name, Jim: Bob Rae, your leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: They all try to pretend they weren't around—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I wasn't; we weren't.

Hon. James J. Bradley: My friend Gilles Bisson was there, the member for Timmins–James Bay; my friend the member for Trinity–Spadina; the former leader of the party—they were all there. They weren't hiding at Honey Harbour or somewhere when they made certain decisions.

They decided they were going to cancel this very favourable contract for Ontario. That contract would have brought clean, cheap power in from Manitoba, I think for 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. I thought, “Well, this is a good idea.” I was encouraging the government of the day, saying, “This sounds like a great idea. It's a nearby province, and you should probably take advantage of this contract.” But the NDP government of the day decided—they always like to pretend now that it was a one-person government; it wasn't. The NDP government of the day said, “No, no. We don't want that. We want to cancel that particular project.”

The other thing I always wondered was—they were so opposed to nuclear power that I thought that they would immediately be closing down the nuclear generating stations around the province of Ontario. But lo and behold, the Darlington project continued and none of the nukes were closed down.

Now, I can understand why that is. I'm not necessarily being critical but just trying to get that on the record and trying to get the response from—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Hon. James J. Bradley: —a person who I think should be—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister knows, when I say “Thank you” three times—

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thought you were thanking me for the comments—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): No, not for the comments. Three times: Wrap up the show. Thank you.

Member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand up today and speak to our member's comments regarding Bill 75.

It's an interesting day when the government is crippling our ability to compete for jobs in environment with the rest of the world with this farce of an energy approach. Combining the Ontario Energy Board with the OPA is just an absolute misstep. You know the OPA is nothing but a bloated layer of bureaucracy that Ontarians cannot afford.

I think the Liberals are finding out, loud and clear—how does that song go, you guys? “It's Not Easy Being Green.” It's not easy being green, with failed policies and a failed vision, and that's exactly what this Green Energy Act is.

Then, to trump that, or put the icing on the cake with Bill 75, it just makes a person shake their head, because really and truly, not only have they crippled our ability in Ontario to attract jobs and investment, but as they cut—and I'm sure our NDP friends will agree that as energy costs continue to rise and they choose to cripple the most vulnerable, the people who cannot afford their energy bills during the winter, people who look to their municipal social services for assistance, and when they cut that in half, by 50%, they're crippling so much more than just our economy. They're taking away the ability for people to survive, and it's just not acceptable. This province has become unaffordable under the Liberal watch, and it's shameful.

We need a vision for energy that is affordable, reliable and is bought into by communities across this province. As I said before, Bill 75 does nothing to address the issues of the day, and we need to be rid of the OPA once and for all. That's the right step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's, once again, an honour to be able to comment on the member from Parkdale–High Park, but I'd like to concentrate on a few comments that the Minister of the Environment made in rebuttal.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Conawapa.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, that was way before my time. And you know what? From my understanding, a contract was cancelled to buy energy from another province and bring it here. Perhaps the minister, in his further comments, could explain what's happening now, because we pay states and other provinces to take our power. So we've kind of turned the tables, but in a bad way, because it's one thing to turn down a contract to buy power but to actually pay other jurisdictions to take your power—actually, in the Toronto Star, it was that now the IESO is thinking about changing that. Because when you export power—actually, when you pay someone to take it, is that actually exporting? Exporting, usually you get money. It's not even giving it away. I don't know. But you can't charge the global adjustment fee.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No brownouts; no blackouts.

Mr. John Vanthof: No brownouts, no blackouts, but we pay other people to take our power. In ridings like mine, with big hydroelectric capacity, at times we force the turbines to turn backwards. We wear out our turbines

to burn electricity. We wear out our equipment to burn electricity.

So let's talk about the present and how this bill is actually hiding things like that, or trying to, and let's further the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, in response to the honourable member from Parkdale–High Park and also the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, when it comes to the NDP and energy, it's very surprising. They oppose almost everything. When it comes to nuclear, they oppose nuclear. But in the meantime, when they were in office, they let the nuclear projects go, and I thank them. I thank them for letting the Darlington project go on and to come online because Darlington nuclear power station is one of the best, more efficient nuclear power stations in the world. We are so proud that Canadian technology is working very well in the Darlington power station.

Today, Mr. Speaker, 80% of our electricity comes emission-free. That's what the NDP wants. But when it comes to green energy, the NDP votes against green energy. When it comes to bringing hydroelectricity from Manitoba, the NDP cancelled that project. It's very, very surprising.

On the conservation side, which the NDP seems to be for, again they opposed that bill. But I'll just give some numbers in relation to conservation and our energy policies in relation to conservation.

Since we came to office, we have conserved 1,700 megawatts of peak time. We have conserved 1,700 megawatts. This is an enormous amount of power we are conserving, and the plan is to conserve over 7,000 megawatts by the year 2030.

Now, they refer to smart meters; I don't have much time to talk about smart meters, which basically save us—to bring down the peak times. We have been saving enormously by introducing this modern technology. We have to go with technology. All countries are going with the technology in relation to energy—

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Parkdale–High Park has two minutes.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thanks to all the members who spoke. First, to the member from Richmond Hill, no, we voted for the Green Energy Act. I really wish the government would check their facts before they stand, because that's a fact. And Timiskaming–Cochrane said it right: Absolutely, we are paying other people to take our power. How absurd is that? We'll leave it at that. Huron–Bruce: Absolutely, we are in favour of rationalizing the way we deliver. The \$100,000 salaries, over \$500,000 for the CEO—and that's cheap, by the way. Remember OPG? Whoa, millions there. Absolutely there's a better way of delivering energy.

But I want to spend the bulk of my time addressing my good friend the Minister of the Environment. I don't know why it is that Liberals stand up in this House over and over again attacking Bob Rae. I don't understand it.

Poor Bob. I'm going to start wearing a T-shirt saying, "Poor Bob."

I don't know what Bob Rae has done to offend the members opposite to the degree that they insist upon attacking him every chance they get. I don't understand it. Certainly out of our now 18 members in our caucus, only two actually ever worked with the guy. The other 16 are pretty happy that we managed to avoid it—but we have a reason. They should uphold their leader. No wonder he's doing so badly in the polls, when his own party continues to attack him. If your own party's attacking you, what hope do you have, Mr. Speaker?

I'll leave it at that. It's been a joy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I must say, I really enjoyed that speech by my colleague from Parkdale–High Park. It really does say an awful lot about the provincial Liberals that they're trying to distance themselves so far from their former provincial counterpart and current federal leader. I can understand that must be very difficult for them at a very difficult time like this is for their party, given that only Justin Trudeau will put his name forward at this point in time.

But here we are, Speaker. We're actually talking about Bill 75, and this, of course, is the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act. There's not much we can say here other than this apparently is more about shuffling bureaucrats down the hall than it is actually about increasing energy distribution, reducing energy distribution, talking about our hydro prices in this province, the transmission of energy or the distribution of energy. It has everything to do with the bureaucratic shuffle.

In fact, Speaker, you will recall—you were here in the previous Parliament—when there were bureaucrats being moved from the provincial government over to the federal government when we saw the HST. You'll recall this, Speaker. Remember, those bureaucrats, on a Friday, were provincial government employees. By the following Monday, they were federal government employees. But not to be outdone—not this government, oh my goodness—\$46,000 is what Mr. McGuinty and his buddies gave those bureaucrats for changing the nameplate on their office doors and their business cards from "provincial government" to "federal government."

These are the types of efficiencies we talk about when we talk about the Ontario Liberal Party. They have no real concern for how much anything costs, so long as they can have the bureaucracy to hide behind.

Now, members of my party have been talking for most of the debate about the fact that this is a shield to shield the government. It's a paranormal force to shield the government from any criticism. We know, for example, and we have said for quite some time that the OPA is more about public relations than anything to do with energy—distribution, transmission, anything. We know, for example, that they started off with about 12 to 14 employees as a transitional agency. We know over that period of time, since this government has been in office

over the past decade, it is now a 235-person organization. Over 87 of their employees are on the sunshine list, making over \$100,000. This is how big this agency has become. As the previous speaker noted, the CEO is now making over \$570,000. And I assure you—

Mr. John Yakabuski: And they don't produce a megawatt of electricity.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod:—in some ways this must be a very good thing, because at least that is the one person in Ontario who can afford his hydro bill. For once, there's only one silver lining, and that's why—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, there are some of those McGuinty consultants who are doing well too.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Exactly.

But I think it's really important for us to revisit what the OPA does. As my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has stated, they don't produce one ounce or iota of energy. They are there to shield the government. They have a CEO that gets paid \$570,000, 87 people are making over \$100,000, and we know that over the past decade this is an agency that's grown from 14 people to 235. Why? Because this government wants to protect itself. Well, that's why, in the Ontario PC caucus, we said, "Let's scrap that agency." It should be called the Ontario Public Relations Authority, the OPRA, not the OPA.

So we on this side think that this bill is in the wrong direction right now. We feel that this bill could have done something more. It could have said, "Okay, this is a redundant agency." As my colleague from Cambridge stated, the letters that he is receiving in committee are the exact same letters coming from the ministry. Almost word for word, these letters are exactly the same. It speaks to the relevance of this agency that is costing taxpayers money, that has nothing to do with the generation, the distribution or the transmission of energy. It has everything to do with public relations.

I would submit to you that after a decade in office we need less Liberal government spinners, not more. We think that this bill should be dealing with getting rid of that agency altogether and saving millions upon millions of dollars for the Ontario taxpayers, who, by the way, through their high taxes and through their hydro bills, are paying for these government agencies. We know, for example, that there are over 620 agencies, boards and commissions that our taxpayers in Ontario are paying for. We have said that this needs to be streamlined.

This legislation also addresses that the minister will go about submitting energy plans for the province's long-term energy needs. We all know that that, at the end of the day, is going to require cabinet approval anyway. So it speaks to the fact that they not only want to beef up the OPA but they want to create this Ontario Electricity System Operator, OESO, and they want to create that as a bigger buffer between them and the public. That is something that we're very concerned about. In the bill, it isn't very transparent. In fact, what it doesn't say is what those timelines would be for approvals. In fact, it's very

sparse on any of the details that one would actually require when debating this piece of legislation.

So we submit to this government that it's time for a change, not only time for a change in this bill but also time for a change in government, because we can't afford to allow this government to continue to grow and continue to spend more of Ontario's hard-earned tax dollars with government agencies that have become so bloated and irrelevant that they don't even do what they say they are going to do in their name. The Ontario Power Authority has nothing to do with power outside of public relations. The Ontario Electricity System Operator is going to have almost the same mandate. That's a problem. That's a problem, Speaker.

Then the minister says, "Well, this will save us \$25 million." We're facing a \$30-billion deficit. Don't you think they should eliminate the entire agency, start from the ground up, get this right for once? But that's not what is happening here.

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I misspoke, so I want to correct my record. I said that this OPA had this massive expansion from 14 employees to 235 over a decade. Speaker, it was seven years. That kind of growth is unprecedented in a government agency, but in this case, where the minister and the commissioner are sending the exact same letters to members of this assembly, you wonder, is there anyone left at the Minister of Energy's office, or is this just an extension of the Minister of Energy's office, a political extension?

We all know, for example, that everything is about politics with this government. How else can we explain the Mississauga power plant? How else can we explain that a Liberal campaign team made a decision to close that plant, not the government?

Mr. Rob Leone: They're calling the shots at the OPA.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think that, as my colleague from Cambridge just said, maybe the Liberal campaign is calling the shots at the OPA as well; it could be. It's a valid question, one worth pursuing, of course, in this assembly as we discuss this piece of legislation.

I want to reiterate, this \$25 million the government is suggesting they're going to save concerns us because, first, we don't believe their number, and second, if they think \$25 million is a big saving when you're facing a \$30-billion deficit, I've got news for them: It's not.

We know that there are going to be some very serious concerns with this new agency being created. It's going to be bigger—that doesn't always mean it's going to be better—and we know that the only result that will come from it is that it will be more of a buffer between this assembly and the people of this province with the government of Ontario. We can't afford that. This government agency that they're about to create is going to go the way the rest of them go: too big—too big and they fail. They fail the people of the province, and there's not enough transparency, there's not enough accountability. We actually really require in this province to get back on track and not support this legislation.

I look forward to questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was rather interesting to listen to the member from Nepean–Carleton, especially when she started to share with us the amount of money that is involved in all of those agencies. We have to remember that not so long ago all of this was under the purview of one not-for-profit agency. It was a Conservative government that decided to privatize the whole lot, break it into little pieces; and then, under the Liberal government, we saw those bureaucracies grow and grow.

When she shares numbers like going from 14 employees to 270-some—I forgot the number exactly—going from a budget of \$14 million to a budget of \$76.4 million, that is phenomenal growth. What did the taxpayers of Ontario get for those investments? From where I'm sitting and from where the people of Nickel Belt are sitting, I don't think we got a fair deal out of this. A lot of people made really large salaries, but very little return for taxpayers' money in that investment.

My colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and I sit on public accounts. We asked for the auditor to go and have a look into, what will it really cost the taxpayers to have cancelled the gas-fired plant in Oakville? What does it really mean? What kind of dollars are on the table? This was blocked. This idea that the Auditor General—who knows his way around the books pretty well, Mr. Speaker—cannot be mandated to go and look blows my mind. We now see a bill that will take even more oversight out of an agency that we all agree is spending a lot of money. Things need to change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? There's two of them up. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was intrigued, first of all, with your question this morning in the House, that you were defending those millionaire hockey players, but I know that you and I share a desire to see hockey on ice this year. I should not be saying this, but I wanted to compliment you on raising a significant issue today.

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Yes. I'm being nice to him.

I want to say as well that I am intrigued—I was very disappointed when in the initial discussions after the recent by-elections, the member for Nepean—Ottawa West-Nepean?

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Nepean, anyway, was not mentioned as one of the leadership candidates. I think it was an oversight for that to happen. I know the member for Oxford agrees with that. I just heard her—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): With all due respect to the minister, we've gone from hockey to now potential leaders running. I don't think you're quite sticking to the issue. Can we get back on track? Thank you. And that's not a track and field comment—back on track.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll tie it in. I was trying to determine whether this was a leadership-type speech. I think there's some considerable support over there for a leadership speech of this kind. It was very good.

I did want to mention as well that sometimes the opposition makes suggestions or demands of government, and governments don't always agree with them. I've got to say that one thing they agreed with that the government did is when the Conservative Party and the NDP demanded that the power plant not be built in Mississauga. We listened very carefully and said, "The Conservatives and the NDP, we're listening to you." And—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you very much, Minister. Questions and comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to comment somewhat on the address by my colleague from Nepean–Carleton, and I will get to that, but I cannot leave the comments of the Minister of the Environment uncontested either—not that I'd be contesting Ms. MacLeod's comments, but he goes on and talks about a lot of different things, from leadership to other issues, by-elections etc. What that was was an attempt to skirt the issue that we're talking about in the House. In fact, this bill is all about skirting the issue, as we called, in the last campaign, for the abolishment of the OPA. This is their answer. They're going to move the shelves around a little bit and change the names on the doors. We'll have everything we had before under one roof. It will probably end up costing us more because that's the way Liberals save money.

But it's also to deflect away from the real issue that people are talking about in the province of Ontario. How long can we exist with the power prices that we have as a result of the failed Liberal energy policies? How long can seniors stay in their homes with the prices of electricity that they've got to pay and this 10% silly little rebate that they've thrown out there to try to placate them? It just won't do it. Energy prices are up over 150% since this government took power; 10% doesn't cut it. The HST takes care of 8% of that, anyway.

It's a little bit perturbing that they would bring in this bill when they don't talk about the real issue, the cost of power in Ontario, not just for the seniors but for the businesses that are trying to create the jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that just earlier today, you'd given me the opportunity to sit in that grand chair there. I have a different perspective and a different respect for the job, the important role that you play in this House to manage debate.

Energy, which is ultimately what we're talking about—power, whether it is from hydroelectric or nuclear or gasoline or the variety of different facets that we have created in this province—is important. The Minister of Energy was attempting to identify a leadership speech. I would submit that he hasn't heard one from his caucus for quite some time, so he wouldn't even

recognize a leadership role if it hit him in the face, actually.

What I would say is that this government has been operating in such an ad hoc way when it comes to the delivery of our system and the management of our system. It has no real, comprehensive long-term policy. They jumped on the renewable energy bandwagon, at the same time appeasing private interests, such as Enbridge, who are major players in the renewable energy field—major profit-makers as well. Instead of benefiting those residents in our ridings who could and who would make investments on their own to reduce their amount of energy consumption and to potentially produce some of their own, they have given full rein and open cheque-books, pretty much, to the large conglomerates that have jumped on to the FIT program without any real consideration to those who are truly affected in our ridings: the residents.

Speaker, I'm pleased to talk to this bill. I think it generally has the right concept but certainly lacks in content and is another minuscule way to address the issues in an ad hoc way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Nepean–Carleton has two minutes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I really appreciate the ability to thank my colleagues from Nickel Belt and Essex—thank you very much for engaging in debate—as well as my seatmate and colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who does know a thing or two about energy in this province, because of course he was the energy critic.

To my colleague the Minister of the Environment, it's always a pleasure to engage you in your delusional debates. Because at the end of the day, the only big issue, of course, in terms of leadership in this House is Mr. McGuinty's and the ongoing battle we see and the jockeying from his cabinet ministers trying to take his

job. But I do wish him best of luck September 28 to 30 as he fights his leadership review, which probably will not be very pleasant, because as we recall, Speaker, this government had an opportunity to win two majorities in this last calendar year, and on both occasions they failed miserably—just like they are with this bill.

It's unfortunate that Bill 75 doesn't really address the fiscal challenges we're facing in Ontario. It doesn't really face the energy crisis that we have. We're actually subsidizing power to end up selling it to Quebec at a subsidized rate as well. That's highway robbery to the constituents of Nepean–Carleton in the greater Ottawa and eastern Ontario region, of course, who are very angry about that.

We have said from the beginning, for years—since this agency was created, the OPA, seven years ago—that it is unaffordable, that it doesn't fulfill its mandate and that it should be scrapped. It's the only agency I know of that can start with 14 people and grow to 235 in seven short years, with 87 people making over \$100,000 and a CEO making \$570,000. Speaker, all this agency does—

Mr. John Yakabuski: And produce nothing.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It doesn't produce anything. In addition to that, it's nothing more than a government spin machine. We shouldn't be amalgamating it with anything. We should be scrapping it. That's why this party, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, will continue to stand up for Ontario taxpayers and continue to hold this McGuinty Liberal government to account and will continue to call for the OPA to be scrapped fully, completely, forever.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1753.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
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 Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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