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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 3 October 2012

Mercredi 3 octobre 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 3 October 2012

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 3 octobre 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**NON-PROFIT HOUSING
CO-OPERATIVES
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LES COOPÉRATIVES DE LOGEMENT
SANS BUT LUCRATIF**

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day. The Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you, sir. I can see your voice is starting to come back a little bit today. It's good to hear.

Government order G65.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): Order G65. Resuming the debate adjourned on October 2, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of non-profit housing co-operatives and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés coopératives et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne les coopératives de logement sans but lucratif et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Good morning. I want to thank the Minister of Economic Development for calling this order this morning. As the Ontario PC critic for municipal affairs and housing, I'm pleased, on behalf of our caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to speak to Bill 65, the Non-profit Housing Co-operatives Statute Law Amendment Act, 2012.

I have to say, right off the top this morning, that we'll be supporting this piece of legislation. I think it's long overdue, and it finally gets on with addressing an issue that the current government has promised to fix since 2007.

I've had the great opportunity since I was elected, and especially since I became the critic for municipal affairs and housing, to meet with a number of co-operative

housing advocates. Yesterday, in the east members' gallery, we had the good folks from the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. I have to tell you that these folks are really patient. Not only were they here yesterday for the minister's lead and her parliamentary assistant's, the member for York West, but they were here last week on the same day that Mr. Leone moved his motion. They've been here many times to advocate with members of provincial Parliament.

Even though they're not here today, MPPs will get the chance to meet them again on October 17; they're going to be here at Queen's Park for their annual co-operative housing day. I encourage people to come and see them, to meet with them during that lobby day. I think MPPs from all three parties will continue to look forward to seeing them at Queen's Park to have the opportunity to discuss very important issues within the co-op housing sector.

I've said many times that these folks—I've met with them and discussed issues that they feel are important, and I think this bill proposes to finally bring about some of the changes they have lobbied for, for many, many years. This bill that we're debating today is good public policy. It's a bill that I believe quite strongly is non-partisan in nature. I hope, and I think, by the comments and questions we had yesterday morning after the minister's and the parliamentary assistant's speeches—based on those comments anyway, I think we have some consensus on how to move forward.

Having said that and having acknowledged that there is lots of common ground in this bill for us to agree upon, it certainly hasn't been an easy road for the proponents of this legislation to travel. It has been quite a long journey, Speaker, and I'm a bit puzzled about why that was the case. Why is it, when we've got an issue that has been talked about for years—and one the government knows full well there is strong consensus for—that it has taken so long for us to have this bill brought forward for second reading? I think it's one of the reasons why the general public gets disenchanted with this place. It's bad enough that it takes us a long time to pass contentious pieces of legislation, but I can appreciate people's frustrations when we have a bill like Bill 65, which there is general agreement on.

The government, as I said earlier, promised to do this for about five years. In that time, we saw a private member's bill on this issue. It was Bill 198, introduced by the member for Etobicoke Centre. Sadly, for people in the industry, that bill, as we all know, died on the order paper.

Before I get too far in my remarks, I want to acknowledge those proponents from the co-op housing sector who have worked so hard to get us to this point. They have every right to celebrate the fact that they've had so many years to try to get this bill, and the fact that we're able to discuss it at second reading is a pretty important part.

That said, and despite our support for this bill, I have to say it's difficult for me to jump for joy today. It's hard for me to pat the government on the back enthusiastically, because, after all, it has taken several ministers and a number of years to really be able to pilot through a very, very straightforward bill. I think, from our side, we just have to say on behalf of the industry that it's about time Bill 65 is here.

Yesterday, the minister outlined in her leadoff some of the issues around Bill 65. It amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and the Co-operative Corporations Act. I should also say that Bill 65—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Do you realize you're the first Tory to talk about housing in this place?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm sure the Attorney General is going to provide two minutes of questions and comments when I'm finished.

Bill 65 also makes some minor amendments to the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, and the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit Act, 2010. But the primary purpose of the bill is to move most co-op tenure disputes out of the courts and put them before the Landlord and Tenant Board. Speaker, this is common sense, and again begs the question why it has taken this government so long to be able to put this forward.

0910

Perhaps it's not that surprising, though. Proponents of this legislation have said it will streamline the dispute process to make it faster, more efficient, more cost-effective and more transparent for both co-ops and their members, and we all know, when we use those types of adjectives, that we sometimes don't use them when we describe the McGuinty government. From eHealth to Ornge and the scandalous decision to sacrifice hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars on the gas plant seat-saver plan, this government has hardly been the model for efficiency, cost-effectiveness or transparency. Perhaps, Speaker, the government was just waiting to bring this legislation in during this, the international year of co-operatives, as declared by the United Nations.

Regardless, as I said, the Ontario PC caucus welcomes this legislation and its primary function of taking most co-op disputes away from the courts and moving them into the Landlord and Tenant Board. Ontario PCs have long supported amending the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act in a way that would allow for this new process. We've done so for some very, very good reasons. First, Ontario's already clogged court system simply doesn't need the additional burden posed by having its dockets filled with this type of civil matter. Our court system has enough trouble

already, and anything we can do to reduce the number of cases in that system should be welcomed.

Beyond reducing clutter in the courts, I think we can all agree that that's really not the appropriate place for landlord and tenant disputes over tenure. After all, when any other landlord in the province is dealing with an eviction or other dispute, they follow the well-established Landlord and Tenant Board process. So it only makes sense for non-profit housing co-operatives to follow the same process. But they can't do this under the existing legislation because co-op accommodations are governed by the Co-operative Corporations Act rather than the Residential Tenancies Act.

In welcoming this move to the Landlord and Tenant Board, I want to stress very clearly that I know there are some serious problems with the Landlord and Tenant Board. Both landlords and tenants aren't happy with the way the board operates, and I'll be speaking to some of the valid reasons that create that unhappiness a little later.

Regardless of those problems, I think we would agree that Ontario's courts are not the venue to resolve disputes between co-ops and their members. We know it takes too long, and the costs are too much to continue using that eviction process. Currently some 300 of these co-op disputes end up before the courts every year, and it's estimated that these cases saddle co-op members with an annual legal bill—I was astounded by this, Speaker—that totals approximately \$1 million. I understand that cases typically cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to resolve; however, in some cases a single case could be up to \$50,000. And those figures don't take into account the tremendous amount of time that both parties are involved with in terms of paperwork to resolve this dispute in our already overburdened court system.

Again, it's unfortunate that the McGuinty government has taken so long to finally get this moving. Using the figures provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the five-year wait seems to mean that some \$5 million was spent on legal costs to resolve these co-op tenure disputes through the courts. It would have been nice to have some action on the file earlier—something I think all three parties would agree with—so that that \$5 million could have been saved.

Let's look at how Bill 65 works. The inner workings of this bill set up a process by which a non-profit housing co-op can make application to the Landlord and Tenant Board to terminate a former member's occupancy and ultimately evict the former member. These provisions under Part V of the Residential Tenancies Act are the same any landlord in the province would use to evict a tenant.

A co-operative has two avenues to terminate a member's occupancy. As with other landlords, the co-operative can issue a notice when it is pursuing an eviction under one or more of the 11 instances set out in the Residential Tenancies Act or the RTA. These include nonpayment of rent, committing illegal acts or causing willful damage to the property.

The new process would also allow the co-operative to pursue an eviction from the Landlord and Tenant Board

without notice in some very limited circumstances. They include:

- where a former co-op member has either terminated his or her membership, and therefore their occupancy rights;

- where the member's occupancy rights have expired by virtue of a predetermined date; and

- where the former member is a post-secondary student in a student housing co-operative and has given notice of termination.

These are very straightforward circumstances which under the existing system would have required that the co-op head to court to complete what really amounts to routine paperwork. Under this bill, they will be able to get these situations resolved by applying directly to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

We should note that this legislation does not entirely remove the role of the courts in the dispute resolution process. There will remain some tenure disputes that will continue to go before the courts, that are not spelled out under the Residential Tenancies Act. These deal with specific bylaws to individual co-ops, and they include provisions like the no-pet rule violation, and also failure for the member to undertake certain member duties, like snow removal or lawn care.

These disputes that can't be resolved by the board itself for the co-op still would ultimately have to be adjudicated by our provincial courts. Bill 65, however, adds a new section to the Co-operative Corporations Act to ensure that these cases will be judged on the merits of each case. In other words, procedural irregularities will no longer be able to trump the basis upon which a co-op board has decided to revoke a person's membership. This is important because it ensures the wishes of the co-op board—which after all represents the members of the co-op—are the primary focus whenever the courts do have to become involved. It's easy to see how this provision will ensure these hearings don't get bogged down in procedural wranglings and stay focused on the issue at hand.

Bill 65 also changes the co-op act in a number of ways to streamline the internal dispute resolution processes used by individual housing co-operatives. Co-ops have functioned very well under these democratic rules for years, and it's essential that they retain the ability to do so regardless of the amendments outlined in Bill 65.

We should also note that respecting this well-established internal dispute resolution process, Bill 65 does not allow individual members to make application to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Disputes that co-op residents may have with the housing provider regarding issues over charges or maintenance will continue to use that internal resolution process. That's the right decision, because there's no need to further encumber the Landlord and Tenant Board with these disputes when a very sound process is already in place within each co-op in the province. Again, these are all changes that the Co-operative Housing Federation and other proponents have been seeking for years.

Let's talk about a little background on how Bill 65 proposes to usher these in. As I said, these are not new, they're not surprising, as the co-op sector has been engaging members of provincial Parliament on these issues for years. Of course, I appreciate that we do need to ensure that all voices are heard on whatever issue we're debating, no matter how much consensus there is between MPPs. The public's voice is also important, and although when I was speaking to the member for York West yesterday he indicated that, "Wouldn't this be a great bill to give second and third reading to?" I think we still need to have that opportunity to have the public look at it and to put it into committee.

Now, again, whenever a politician on this side of the House talks about committees—the government has had terrible difficulty managing its minority. We still have not got a committee system set up. So even if we allowed debate to collapse today, which I know is not going to happen, there would be no place for this bill to go. I think it would be a shame, when we have general support from all three parties, that this bill would languish with no committees. I'm sure that we want the public to have an opportunity to come to hearings and to also give them an opportunity to propose amendments before we bring this bill back for third reading.

0920

I also wanted to spend some time this morning to step back and to look at exactly what housing co-operatives are and the important role that they play in our province's housing mix. Housing co-operatives are not-for-profit organizations in which members do not own equity in their residence. If they move, their home is returned to the co-op to be offered to another individual or family who needs an affordable home. That's what's great about co-operative housing: it's a diverse mix of where people can call home. They're an example of the kinds of neighbourhoods any sound housing strategy should strive to achieve.

Some co-op members pay reduced monthly rent that's based on their income, with government support funding the difference. Because they are non-profits, co-ops charge members only enough to cover the costs of repairs, as well as ensuring that they can sustain a reserve of some funds. The result is that they provide housing that can be more affordable, which is why we need to champion them as a very important part of Ontario's affordable housing strategy.

As I mentioned earlier in discussing the amendments proposed by Bill 65, co-ops are democratic organizations that are controlled by their members. Every member has a vote in decisions about their housing, including electing the co-op's board of directors. Each housing co-operative is a legal organization, incorporated as a co-op.

Anyone watching at home this morning may not be completely familiar with how substantial a part of Ontario's housing mix co-ops really are. There are currently more than 550 non-profit housing co-operatives in the province, which add up to a total of 44,109 households in which more than 125,000 people live.

I mentioned this in my questions and comments yesterday after the minister and the parliamentary assistant did their leadoff, and MPPs will be interested to know that there are housing co-ops in 95 of the 107 ridings. So it's a debate that hits very close to home and affects 90% of members of provincial Parliament in this House.

In my riding of Leeds–Grenville, I'm very proud to represent two of these co-ops. Both are in the city of Brockville. The Brock-Seaway Housing Co-op is located on Dana Street, and the Shepherd's Green Co-operative Homes is on Liston Avenue. If you spend any time visiting, as I have, these 30-unit co-ops, you'll find that they're extremely lively neighbourhoods—and I can tell you they're a great place to live, and that a great mix of families call them home. I want to just congratulate the people at Brock-Seaway and Shepherd's Green for being such a part of what makes that city a vibrant community.

We all know that, even in the best circumstances and in the best accommodations, there are going to be issues that arise with some landlord-tenant relationships, issues that can't be resolved by the two parties. So it's welcome that we're seeing Bill 65 ensure that those issues will no longer be dealt with in the courts.

I mentioned earlier that there are some glaring problems with Ontario's Landlord and Tenant Board as it currently operates. In fact, if there's any issue I have with Bill 65, it's that I have serious doubts of the process that co-ops and members are going to find waiting for them after this bill is passed. That's because the board is hardly a model of efficiency in action; in reality, it's quite the opposite.

While I'm attending events in my riding, a weekend doesn't go by that I don't at least have one person who is a landlord talk to me about issues. I had it just on Sunday. I was at an event and a landlord stopped and told me some horror stories about what they've had to go through. These aren't owners of large multi-unit buildings; they're the small three- or four-unit, which is really the vast majority of landlords in the province, who I accept and I believe are really the backbone of the rental housing sector in this province.

More and more, they're coming forward to express frustrations that they experience at the board, whether they were to collect back rent or in fact to evict a problem tenant. In fact, many of them are telling me they're so fed up that they're considering getting out of the business altogether. I can tell you these are the landlords that we need to keep. They're landlords who provide great accommodations, are quick to address any problem that arises and have an absolute respect for their tenants.

Now, I know that members in this place have probably all read stories from the Toronto Star's tenant-from-hell series. Those articles told the story of a North York landlord who spent nearly a year battling with the Landlord and Tenant Board, trying to evict his nightmare tenant.

I want to quote an interesting line from a recent Toronto Star article, because I think it's enlightening, in part for what it says, but more for its source. The Star said its coverage of this tenant-from-hell story shows “how

easily tenants can manipulate the provincially funded Landlord and Tenant Board, using protections designed to avoid unfair evictions to stay in properties rent-free.” That's the Toronto Star, not exactly the mouthpiece for landlords in the province of Ontario. So when the Toronto Star is using language like this, I think most of us will acknowledge that there is a problem here.

This was an extreme case that was in the story, but the problems that are in those stories are similar to stories that I'm hearing in my own riding of Leeds–Grenville. As I said, it's a rare opportunity that I would go a week in my riding without having a landlord of some type express to me his or her frustration. I've had landlords like Mike Gordon come into my office with pictures showing me thousands of dollars in damages that tenants have willfully done to his property. Yet he takes this evidence to the board and he finds that the deck is stacked against him and that there are roadblocks at every turn.

Mike isn't the only landlord who has talked to me about them, about how difficult it is to get an order from the board, and then, when they're fortunate enough to actually get one, how impossible it is to actually enforce. Where is the legislation to deal with this issue, from the government opposite? How come we can't have that type of reform and that type of discussion between landlords and tenants in the province of Ontario?

In debating another bill that the government put forward on housing, Bill 19, I mentioned one of the good guys, who is a landlord in my riding, Ted Carr. He has been providing housing in Brockville for decades. I know he tries very, very hard to treat his tenants fairly and to accommodate them even when they're late for their rent. Like any good landlord, he realizes it's better to work with tenants to resolve any issues, including rent arrears, than to face the dreaded alternative of a trip to the Landlord and Tenant Board. That just creates animosity between the two parties, and ultimately, at the end of the day, it leaves him with an empty unit to try to get a tenant for. As much as he tries to be fair, though, inevitably there are going to be disputes, and some are going to be ending up at the board.

I want to capture, in Ted's own words, the experience that it's like for a small landlord, and his perspective, because I think it bears repeating: “I have, and continue to have, money outstanding from a tenant, this after many requests for payment, different hearings and appearing at different levels of the system, the bureaucracy, getting several judgments, yet I still have money outstanding.

“Not many have the time, the patience or the resources to litigate these matters. It is the opinion of this landlord that the system, which has seen benefits over the years, has to be simplified, the process more friendly.... One has no idea until they experience this bureaucracy from a person with no idea of where to start, the frustration of where to turn or what to do now. To go to the tribunal to be turned away because of an incorrect process, incorrect form served, to hear that the tenant has access to duty counsel, while the landlord has no support.” That's his quote.

Ted is among the many landlords asking me why the government can't take a look at the obvious problems that exist with the board and come up with something that's simpler and more streamlined. What we need is a process that works for both sides and one that really tries to do what the board was intended to do in the first place, and that's resolve disputes. Instead, our current system gets bogged down in procedural matters and bureaucratic delays that only perpetuate the original complaint.

0930

Rather than sorting these conflicts out, I believe the atmosphere at Landlord and Tenant Board hearings makes things worse. I think if the minister really wants to get an understanding of just how much of a struggle it is for a landlord to recover back rent or be compensated for property damage, she should go through the process herself. If she did, I suspect she might be a little more motivated to press for some long-overdue changes to that system.

Having reviewed the details of Bill 65 and provided some background on housing co-ops in the province, I think it's easy to understand why I wish the government would have dealt with those changes in the proposed legislation a lot earlier. Had we done that, perhaps the minister would be coming forward today with a plan to create more housing co-operatives in the province of Ontario. That's the piece of legislation that I'd prefer to sit here and debate this morning. Sadly, though, we're not seeing that type of ambitious agenda from this government or this minister. Instead, time and time again, we're seeing bills like this come forward.

Yes, our party is going to support Bill 65 in the big picture. It's really some housekeeping and should have been part of a much larger plan of action by the present Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, but that's not what we're seeing, Speaker. We don't need some relatively straightforward housekeeping bill. We need some initiatives that are more than just window dressing—and that's what our caucus calls bills like this: window dressing. They've got a great-sounding bill. They've got a great headline. They make for some great publicity. But really, in the whole scheme of things, they're just window dressing. So we need to have a far more substantive action plan on housing in the province of Ontario.

It reminds me, Speaker, when you look at some of these shell bills, of that old TV commercial: "Where's the beef?" It's all filler. We need some more substantive policy.

Look at the bill we gave third reading for yesterday, Bill 2, the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit Act. When you deal with a bill where a senior needs \$10,000 at the max to barely even cover the HST that the government has imposed on the renovations, it's hardly a benefit.

There's also Bill 30 we passed, the Family Caregiver Leave Act. Actually, when the minister was asked by our critic, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, who they consulted with the bill, she actually looked at him and said, "No one."

When you look at some of these bills where there's no consultation and it's just a shell bill to grab a headline, it's ridiculous. We've seen it with our own Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. We saw it with her other housing bill that was passed in the spring session, Bill 19, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. When it was introduced, we heard the government taking a lot of time talking about Bill 19—that it was going to be the panacea. It was going to be a piece of legislation that was finally going to make life more affordable for tenants in the province of Ontario.

The reality, as we said from the time that Bill 19 was tabled, turned out to be something much different. This bill won't build any new affordable housing and it won't make life affordable for Ontario families. That's what we said when we debated Bill 19, and I'm pleased to now say that I have some evidence to back up those statements. This was the first year that act, Bill 19, was used in calculating the rent increase guideline. So we're all waiting for the annual announcement in August to find out what sort of impact the minister's legislation would have. We were so anxious to discover the real difference it would make for the lives of tenants.

Well, Speaker, the savings amounted to one tenth of a percentage point. That's right. Thanks to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the average Ontario tenant household will have an extra loonie in their pocket every month. It's true. The government's big plan for affordable housing will save money and give somebody renting a typical two-bedroom apartment in Ontario \$1 per month.

Times are tough, and I know people are counting pennies, so every little bit helps. But I have to tell you, since August, I haven't had any tenants calling my office to say how much they appreciate the government's efforts.

I have to give the minister credit. She'll probably say I'm being a little too negative by saying tenants are only saving \$1 a month, so I'm going to try to put a more positive spin on it, Speaker. It's \$12 a year; they get to save \$12 a year. I hope that the government members realize I tried my best to put a positive spin on that for her. I hope she feels that it sounded a little better.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Is that before or after they put on the HST?

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, that's a good question, to the member for Algoma–Manitoulin. In a few moments, I'm going to get to a good bill that you put forward, because certainly that dollar a month isn't going to do anything to cover the cost of a tenant's skyrocketing hydro bill.

I want to remind that under this government, hydro rates have been increased eight times since 2003—84%. If you were a family that had one of those smart meters, it was a 150% increase. Part of the reason for that increase in our hydro rates, as we all know, was the cost to cover the minimum \$650 million under the government's scandalous decision to cancel the power plants in Mississauga and Oakville, to save a few seats.

But, ironically, there was a bill that was passed in this Legislature that would have given those family budgets

the relief they deserved on their hydro bill, and that was from the member for Algoma–Manitoulin. I had a great chat with him last evening at one of the receptions here. It was when, on November 24, the Progressive Conservative and New Democratic caucuses stood united to pass Bill 4, the Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act, for the HST rebate on home heating.

With that famous vote of 54-50, we showed that residents of the province deserved a break on their HST, to improve their home heating costs. That's the initiative, not Bill 19. That Bill 4 would have been the initiative to provide a relief for families. But it didn't suit the government's agenda. It did not suit the government's agenda, so they committed that that bill would go nowhere, even though the will of the majority of members in this Legislature felt that it was a priority. It was a sad day for democracy in the province of Ontario.

My colleagues and I in the PC caucus, throughout the debate of Bill 19, talked about it as window dressing. I think the facts have borne that out, with that dollar-a-month increase that people were going to get. Only a government that was that adrift, in the face of so many housing issues, would have tabled Bill 19.

I have to quote something from the previous critic for our party: my friend, the former member for Burlington, Joyce Savoline. As critic for municipal affairs and housing for our party, one of her bold ideas that she talked about in this place was the creation of a housing benefit. It's an idea that poverty advocates, a cross-section of the housing industry, as well as tenant and landlord organizations have supported.

We know the government has ruled out this idea. It hasn't even been on their legislative agenda. But I think something like that, and a discussion about that type of initiative, would be good for the three parties to engage in. It's really something that I think we should all turn our minds to, and it would be a much stronger piece of public policy to discuss.

To be fair, the government did take a shot at it. They created the ROOF program, rental opportunities for Ontario families. But they have a bit of a habit that they sometimes make criteria in these programs so restricted that—it really didn't have the impact on families that it could have. Like the examples I cited earlier, this was another attempt for positive press, but again, it didn't measure up to all the hype that it had before. Instead of working with the many groups interested in the idea of a housing benefit, the government went for a quick fix and a quick hit on the news cycles.

I want to refer the current minister to a report entitled *A Housing Benefit for Ontario: One Housing Solution for a Poverty Reduction Strategy*. I'm sure that the minister is familiar with the report. There were so many diverse groups that came together to produce it. They included the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, the Greater Toronto Apartment Association, the Daily Bread Food Bank, the Metcalf Foundation and the Atkinson Charitable Foundation.

0940

The housing benefit can be a targeted solution, the temporary lending of a hand until the recipient's economic circumstances improve. Again, if people know they don't have to worry about having a roof over their heads, they can make better decisions about improving their prospects for the future. It's really, I believe, an effective way to break the cycle of poverty, and I would really wish that we could engage in that type of debate.

Consider, too, that it would allow people to access some of the more than 20,000 vacant rental units that exist in Ontario right now, even as people are in a state of desperation for housing. We know this government has no plan that will get a sufficient number of new housing units built, so why not explore this approach and take advantage of some of the existing housing supply? As I said during debate on one of the previous government bills, I think it would show that the minister was serious about the housing problem, and I think there would be great potential for us to have a discussion on that strategy. We can do it without increasing spending by reallocating how funds are spent now.

The housing benefit study examined existing shelter support programs and found that they are inefficient, ineffective and, for too many Ontarians, nonexistent. Worse, the system is actually a disincentive for people trying to break the cycle of poverty by seeking employment. We all know that any income will trigger a loss of benefits and suddenly put them back in that unsustainable living situation.

As the housing benefit report stated, it examined—I just want to quote it for you now:

“Unpaid rent and its consequences also affect costs for governments and landlords. For landlords, the costs include: rent that they cannot recover; time spent filing applications with a housing tribunal; and time delays in finding new tenants. For government, there are administrative costs in dealing with eviction and in programs such as rent banks that provide temporary help to” those “in arrears. There are also the costs of legal aid and temporary shelters for those who are evicted for not paying their rent.”

Unfortunately, with this government lurching from crisis to crisis, from scandal to scandal—they're too busy coming up with wedge bills or window dressing to deal with the problem. So I suspect that, like a lot of problems in Ontario, real change won't come until we change the folks on the other side.

I spoke earlier about the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, which has been a champion for the reforms proposed in this bill that we're debating today. The Ontario region of the CHFC was also the co-author of a report issued during the last provincial election campaign in September 2011. That report, entitled *Where's Home?*, outlined the very real need for politicians to focus on creating new affordable housing spaces.

I'm enlightened to use some of the details in that report to measure the current minister's performance. The need was particularly acute in the part of the province

where I come from, in eastern Ontario. Vacancy rates in the region were among the lowest in the province—three times lower, in fact, than the 3% figure that's considered a healthy retail housing market. Harvey Cooper, who was here yesterday, of the CHFC, noted in a news release, "This year's findings clearly demonstrate that the gap between homeowners' and tenants' incomes is growing ever wider and many Ontarians of low and modest means are struggling to find a home that they can afford ... I worry about families being forced to choose between paying for the necessities of life, putting food on the table and paying the rent."

Twelve months later, thanks to this government continually opting to kick the can down the road rather than roll up their sleeves and get to work, the picture isn't any better for households across the province. In fact, I'd argue that the situation has actually worsened. Equally disturbing is that the number of families that find themselves in such a desperate situation grows every single day.

That same report also notes that in order to keep up with the growing demand, Ontario needs to see 10,000 new affordable housing units built each year. Again, I want to ask the minister how much progress she is making on that aspect of the affordable housing problem. Put aside the spin and do-nothing bills like Bill 19, that she put up before. The statistics speak for themselves.

What we know is that there were 156,358 households waiting for affordable, rent-geared-to-income housing at the end of last year. This number has increased every single year for the past five years, and it rose 2.9% in 2011, on the heels of a staggering 7% increase in 2010. Sadly, the need cuts across all demographic groups, including the 56,130 families with children who are stuck on those waiting lists.

The latest report from ONPHA also underlines that there is a growing need for adequate housing for seniors. Twenty-five per cent of those on waiting lists are seniors.

As I stated, we need 10,000 new housing units every single year, to try to meet the need. This isn't happening. As ONPHA clearly states in its report, "New affordable housing is not being built in sufficient quantity to meet the growing demand, and, in many cases, the rents for these units are not affordable to households on waiting lists without an additional subsidy.

"Municipalities now have responsibility for the planning and delivery of affordable housing options in their communities, and a local commitment to affordable housing is vital to addressing the shortage. But municipalities do not have the resources to do this alone."

Strip away all the rhetoric from the affordable housing discussion, and we discover that on this watch of this government, waiting lists are growing every single year. In fact, the waiting list has grown by 26%, or over 32,000 households, since 2007, and the numbers are up across all individuals—families, seniors, single parents. In my riding, the waiting list for families alone is 500 people.

When we talk about the waiting lists, we need to understand how long they can be and how long it can

take a family or an individual to get off of them. Overall, wait-lists can be as short as one month or as long as 10 years.

Looking at the average wait in 2011, we see the following: that seniors spent two and a half years on the waiting list; non-senior singles and couples, 3.4 years; families, 2.3 years. That's far too long waiting for a safe and secure home, which we know is the foundation that everyone needs for a successful and fulfilling life.

It's not going to change until this government gets serious about resolving the problem. Until then, we'll be stuck in this terrible situation that we have now, where for every household that gets off the waiting list, three more get on.

While those on the waiting lists are clearly the men, women and children who are suffering the most, we know the problems don't end there. Even those fortunate enough to have a roof over their heads are desperately struggling to hold things together. Provincially, we know that some 20% of tenant households spend more than 50% of their income on rent. Additionally 32% are in core need, meaning that their current accommodation fails to meet standards of adequacy, suitability and, of course, affordability. That 32% figure represents a staggering 630,000 households. It's estimated that 1.5 million Canadians live in substandard housing today. Those are depressing numbers, Speaker.

When you look at the issue we're debating here, people need to understand that the reality out there is far different than the picture that the government paints for us every day. Day after day, their members shuffle in here and take their seats over there and wait for their moment to stand up to defend the indefensible. Whether it's the power plant scandal, our economy, our fiscal situation or our debate today on housing, the government members are all on their feet, telling Ontarians all is well. I think they're in complete denial over there. Honestly, I have to wonder how we can continue with debates like we're having today.

We need to have a different plan from the government on this file. We have a government that has run out of gas. They're coasting, and we can see it every day. We look at their lack of engagement, their lack of debate on simple bills day after day. We all know, Speaker, that they have no plan over there. They're lurching from one scandal, one crisis to the next, desperately doing whatever it takes to cling to power just that little bit longer.

0950

Over the past week we've seen proof of it with the scandal, the mountains of documents that were given on the power plant scandal, thousands that were either redacted or completely whited out. The fact is that the power plant scandals affect every single bill we talk about. Look at Bill 65; think of the affordable housing that could have been created in this province with \$650 million that was squandered for a political decision. It just shows this government's complete mismanagement of the energy sector.

There must be a reason why successful Ministers of Housing have failed so completely when it comes to the

critical issue of creating more housing stock. I think the real reason is the fact that this government can't deliver. We need to start looking at the waiting lists, and we need to look at working across party lines.

It's just utter mismanagement of the finances of this province that have put us in this area. There's no money that this government is offering municipalities for making repairs to their rapidly deteriorating stock of social housing. The backlog of repairs now sits at \$3 billion, and the government is still not offering sufficient funds.

I think all Ontarians recognize that this province is in a dire financial situation. I'm not really sure the average person would understand how dire it is. Take a look at Ontario's annual operating deficit, the amount of money we spend in this province above what we take in; many people know that it's about \$13 billion. Now that's bad, and people certainly expect better of their government. Let's talk about just how bad it is. Consider this: Ontario's 2011 deficit was actually twice as big as every other province combined. That definitely puts the McGuinty government in a league of its own. It's really quite an accomplishment, especially when, on their watch, they've actually seen government revenue increase by \$35 billion annually.

The problem is that as good as this government is at taking money out of taxpayers' pockets, unfortunately, they are even better at spending it. That's why we're taking in \$35 billion more every year while this government is spending \$45 billion more on an annual basis. You don't need a degree in math to figure out that that's not a sustainable way to run a government.

But they do add up to one thing for sure, and that's the fact that Ontario, on this government's watch, has become a have-not province. All that red ink doesn't look bad on paper and doesn't just give MPPs cause for concern; the citizens of Ontario need to understand that this has a real connection to the services that they care about. When we carry a huge deficit and a debt that's on track to hit \$411 billion, it's a huge drain on the resources we have to put forward for things that we invest in, things like health, education and, of course, affordable housing.

Remember that the interest on the debt alone is \$10.1 billion. That would make the ministry of debt servicing the third-largest portfolio after health and education. Certainly, one could do a lot for affordable housing with \$10 billion, looking at the existing housing stock that municipalities have to deal with, and the fact that \$3 billion of it is in desperate need of repairs. Every percentage point that we have a jump in interest rates adds \$500 million in debt servicing costs. That's crazy; that's an unsustainable fiscal model that this government has put forward. They can't continue to ignore it. They can't continue to kick the can down the road.

We've all got ideas on what to do, and I'm sure that the third party, when they do their lead for Bill 65, will have a number of ideas that they want to put forward on how to add to the housing market.

I'm glad that Harvey's here from the federation. Welcome back. I gave you another plug for your lobby day on October 17.

I also want to take this opportunity to recognize the fact that they've done such a great job in doing their work. I mentioned earlier in debate that this bill coincides with the International Year of Cooperatives, as declared by the UN. I think it's a great opportunity for us to celebrate and acknowledge the important role that co-ops play in so many aspects of our communities, including the housing sector. We know that there are some 1,300 different co-ops operating in Ontario today, serving their members and their communities well. Indeed, as the UN slogan for the year states, "Cooperative Enterprises Build a Better World." We can see so many examples of that on display every day across Ontario, in everything from housing to banking and agriculture. The UN Secretary-General observed the following: "Co-operatives are a reminder to the international community that it is possible to pursue both economic viability and social responsibility." I suggest this is a particularly accurate description of the values we find at the core of co-op housing and why we need to ensure it remains a vital part of Ontario's affordable housing strategy.

Again, I want to take this opportunity to commend the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. It was great to have representatives here in the House yesterday. Harvey is here, and I'm glad that he's here. I hope that he has a chance to talk to some members about his organization, and as I mentioned in my brief remarks, I'm looking forward again to seeing them later on in October for their lobby day.

As we know, the UN declared 2012 as the International Year of Cooperatives, and the co-op housing federation has done something special this year. They've declared 2012 to be the Year of Getting Management Right. Speaker, I can't resist saying I wish that the McGuinty government would do the same, would do the same as what Harvey is talking about: getting the management right. Maybe they can get some advice from our friends from the federation when they come for a visit later this month. Ontarians would be a lot better off if the McGuinty government would get management of the province of Ontario right.

Dedicating a year like that, and their unwavering commitment to co-op housing residents, some 125,000 who live in the province, is commendable. I'm so impressed with the federation, while reviewing their website, to see a comprehensive tool kit that they've developed to help co-ops become 2020 co-ops. The plan sets out five standards required to become a good 2020 co-op: (1) a mission statement and a vision for the future; (2) good governance and a principled leadership; (3) sound management; (4) a long-term plan; and (5) a commitment to environmental sustainability.

I think anyone reviewing this tool kit will quickly see how forward-thinking and innovative our housing co-ops are. They're committed to evolving in a way that ensures they will continue to serve the needs of their residents and meet the challenges posed by our changing economic and social climate. That ability to adapt is fundamental in any successful organization. And I wanted to make sure I

took a few minutes while Harvey was here—I'm glad I saw him in the gallery—to compliment the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada for demonstrating such leadership.

Speaker, I found it a bit ironic, though, yesterday to hear in the debate both the minister and her parliamentary assistant looking for some support from this side of the House in their efforts to lobby the federal government for affordable housing funding. I have to say it's a bit ironic, because Ontario municipalities have been telling the McGuinty government it needs to step up to the plate, that the McGuinty government should step up and do more for a long-term affordable housing plan that municipalities have in their lap.

Yesterday, we heard from the government, saying, "Hey, don't blame us. It's the folks in Ottawa whose fault it is." We all know that this government made its plan—its plan—completely dependent on federal funding at a time when, I suggest, the feds were crystal clear that they were getting out of the business of housing.

1000

If there's one thing that I know about the McGuinty government, it's that it's pretty quick to throw a stone at the federal government whenever they want. I'm not just talking about in this Legislature, but also in question period. They blame the feds for not giving them the cash.

I'm sure, if anything goes wrong with the delivery of the housing plan, they'll blame their municipal partners too, because we all know that the McGuinty government's long-term affordable housing program puts the onus entirely—entirely—on Ontario's municipalities to do all the heavy lifting. Municipal service managers are the ones working hard to develop the 10-year plans with objectives and targets. They even have to come up with a mechanism to measure their progress. Now, I'm all for ensuring that municipalities have their voice, but this plan, the government's plan, puts everything—everything—on the shoulders of municipalities and does so with no funds to offset the administration costs, let alone give them funding to have predictability in trying to meet those housing targets.

If there's a government that needs to step up and do its job, it's the McGuinty government that needs to step up. So with all due respect to the minister and the parliamentary assistant, the member for York West, I'm going to confine my lobbying efforts to the McGuinty government.

Just in closing, when we—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a surprise? What? Again, you'll have lots of opportunity to provide comments.

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm glad you're so engaged today. I'm glad you're so engaged.

When we measure growth in average weekly earnings across Canada, between March 2011 and March of this year, the results, I suggest, were nothing short of embarrassing for this province. Where did we finish? Dead last, 10th out of 10. Saskatchewan led the way with a 5.9%

increase in weekly incomes. Nova Scotia was ninth at 2%. Ontario was basically stagnant, with a measly 0.1% monthly increase. That's not the province that I'm from, Speaker. That's not the province that I want us to be from.

We need to do better. We need to have a better plan. We've got essentially nothing from this government. They've failed. Their formula for success isn't working for Ontarians, whether they want to own their home, whether they want to rent from a private landlord or whether they want to live in a non-profit housing co-operative.

The McGuinty government has had nine years to get it right, and instead of getting better, things are getting worse in the province of Ontario. We're falling deeper into debt, and we're continuing to lag behind the rest of Canada on just about every single economic measure you want to use.

I welcome Bill 65, and our party is going to support this piece of legislation. But this bill and our support for it don't change the fact that Ontario is on the wrong track under this government. Only the Ontario PC Party has bold ideas that will get this province back on track.

Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me this wonderful hour to talk about Bill 65. I appreciate the opportunity.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I listened intently to the member's lead-in on this bill, and I'm thrilled to hear the Conservatives talking about affordable housing. I'm not here to knock them. I'm here to congratulate them, because I think that effort needs to continue, and it needs to continue across this House. So don't get me wrong on my statements: We all need to be talking about affordable housing.

I'd also like to welcome Harvey here on behalf of the government relations from co-ops.

The work that co-ops do in our province is so important. I know in Hamilton, I have some great co-ops, and they have wonderful initiatives. Being environmental—I have a co-op that has solar panels, high-efficiency furnaces, new floors, appliances—all of this coming from the great work that co-ops do. It's initiatives like this that not only show concern for our environment, but it's also generating income for them. If we have initiatives like this going forward, that the government's bringing, that are going to be saving co-ops money, then more co-ops across this province can be doing these initiatives because they'll have more funds in their banks to be bringing initiatives forward like that.

I would like to congratulate the co-op in my riding that has just celebrated its 20th anniversary, and that would be Stoneworth Co-operative. I have many co-ops that I'm supportive of in our riding, but I'm looking forward to these changes coming forward. I know that we on this side of the House will definitely be supporting this.

We do have a little concern, though, I'd have to say, Mr. Speaker, and it's about the appeals process. We would like to see that tenants would be able to use that

appeals process also, not just landlords and the co-ops. We know that the tenants need to have a voice. The procedure, the way that's set up through the co-op housing, is the backbone of it, and we'd like to see that continue. Thank you.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: This is truly a historic day. For the first time in 17 years, the Conservatives are talking about affordable housing. Let's just deal with history. What is the first thing that Mike Harris did, before he even cut the welfare by 22%? He cancelled every affordable housing project, every affordable housing—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I see someone's touched a button. I believe that when I'm standing, you're not talking, and I believe that goes for the member for Leeds–Grenville especially. He's answering your presentation.

By the way, stop the clock.

I would suggest that we give the Attorney General an opportunity to respond. You may not like what he hears—but I can't even hear him. Thank you.

Continue.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Mike Harris, for the record, cancelled every affordable housing project that was on the books then or ready to go, which cost this province and the taxpayers of this province millions and millions of dollars. Number two, the only consultation Mike Harris ever had—and he openly admitted it in the House here; he would always say, “We had our consultation on election day.” So let's just remind them of that.

The last affordable housing program that we had in the province of Ontario was as a result of an agreement that I had the privilege to sign on behalf of my government in 2005, with the then federal government led by Paul Martin, for some \$720 million worth of a joint affordable housing project that created over 10,000 units. Why has there been nothing built since then? Because the Harper government is not even interested in talking about affordable housing or putting up their half of the money, which is the way affordable housing has usually been financed. Yes, we need affordable housing. I've been involved in this business for over 40 years at the municipal non-profit level. I've built non-profit projects etc. It's great to see that in the Conservative Party, all of the Red Tories aren't quite dead yet. Fight for this within your caucus, because it's the first time in 17 years that we've heard any comments from the Conservatives about affordable housing at all. Welcome.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's my pleasure to say I support this bill. It's a very worthwhile initiative. It's trying to streamline the process of solving disputes among tenants and co-operatives. That's a noble idea and makes great sense. It's appalling to see that \$1 million is spent on dispute-solving in courts, when something simple like this could be solved at the landlord-tenancy board.

It's a pleasure to see that the government is so concerned about efficiencies and cost savings, when they were not too concerned about \$650 million that was wasted recently and caused great turmoil and commotion in the House; it was such an unpleasant thing and a waste of time for all of us. We had Ornge scandals, we had eHealth etc.

I applaud the government on this great initiative. It's going to help people. It would be nice if they went even a little bit further. There is a need for greater housing, as my colleague from Leeds–Grenville pointed out. Again, some of the \$650 million that was wasted could have been spent that way to truly help people who are standing there in need, and that should have been done. I'll close on those words, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to say “great presentation” to the member for Leeds–Grenville. I, as well, enjoyed our discussions that we had last night. It was really nice to actually have that conversation with you, to get to know you, and I look forward to having those types of conversations with everybody in this House. We sometimes have different perceptions of what we think to what individuals actually do and how things are done in their riding. It's nice to see that—again, I just want to say I appreciate the discussion that we had last night.

Again, I appreciate the support that the Conservative caucus gave to my private member's bill, because removing the HST would actually be a very big savings for individuals back home. It would be a very big step forward in making life a little bit more affordable for them.

Now back to this bill: The one thing it does do is that it will improve the speed in regard to how these conflicts, these issues, these concerns get dealt with, and it's going to provide an efficient resolution mechanism in order to do that. But by doing that, there are some fundamental problems that we need to really address, where this bill doesn't do that, and that is providing actual affordable housing for individuals in Ontario. That is really the white elephant in this bill, that it doesn't actually implement those things.

There are benefits to it, and I want to commend the Liberal government. This was one of their messages that they've been on record talking about since 2007. We're in 2012. Why did it take five years to actually do something positive and get this going? I'm not sure. But I'm going to enjoy hearing the debate about this particular bill as we move forward.

There are benefits for individuals, organizations and the co-ops throughout this bill. I look forward to hearing the debate about that, and I look forward to presenting my comments to this bill.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain, the Attorney General, the member for Algoma–Manitoulin and also my eastern Ontario

brother, the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills. I want to thank you for your comments.

I was a little disappointed with the Attorney General—I have to be honest—with his comments. I've known him for years, and I just wish he wouldn't focus on the past. I just wish he would focus on the future. Actually, I hoped he would stand up and basically denounce a casino in Kingston that would cripple the town of Gananoque. I hoped he would denounce that today in the House but, unfortunately, he didn't.

I do want to thank the members for their comments. I honestly do believe that when we have a bill, even though it doesn't create the new housing stock that is so desperately needed in the province, there should be some mechanism so that we can, in good faith, look at our proponents and be able to have a legislative agenda that we can actually tell them and be able to say that this bill has some political will, that we'll be able to transcend, create committees, have some public hearings, deal with some amendments. And I appreciate that the New Democrats have got some ideas about some changes. I'm sure Ms. Forster, when she does her lead, will talk about that.

I think we have to have an adult discussion, at some point, regarding housing issues in the province. We've seen to date, with this bill—it's a very minor consensus bill; everybody agrees. Bill 19 just didn't cut it. I know I walked out this morning and saw a gentleman, Cal, who I see pretty regularly here at Queen's Park. They need better out of this government. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to once again welcome the family and friends of page Jenna Rutherford to Queen's Park. In the gallery today are her mother,Carolynn Rutherford, and her aunts Marilyn Vandenberg and Lisa Pirie. With them are a number of Jenna's friends from East Oxford Central Public School in Norwich township: Jolanda Laan, Abby Grass, Annet Laan, Kristy Langeveld, Joelle Sinnige, Sabine Sinnige, Melissa Sinnige and Emily Wilker. I want to welcome all of them to Queen's Park and take this opportunity to thank Jenna for all her hard work in her tenure here at Queen's Park.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome to the Legislature today Mr. Paul Street. He is the father of page Maggie Street from my wonderful riding of Mississauga–Erindale. Maggie is actually the captain of the pages today. I really want to extend him a very warm welcome.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to welcome to the west members' gallery Elaine Fusciardi and Leo Fusciardi. They are the parents of my page from Thornhill, Roberto

Fusciardi, who is the page captain today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to introduce Carol Anne Boothby, who is the mother of page Christina Boothby, who is joining us today. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to be here yesterday, but Chief Boothby, her grandfather and a former chief of police, was here as well, along with other members of the family. So we're thrilled to have her mom with us today.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my pleasure to recognize two guests from my riding of Durham, Mr. Mike Slocombe and a good friend of his, Mervyn Thomas, from London, England. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I would just like to recognize a birthday, Mr. Peter Tabuns's, today, and to wish him a happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will pause for the rousing rendition of Happy Birthday—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No! Rule it out of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome members of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association here today. Billy Cheung is with us, the chair; and Dennis Darby, the CEO; along with other members of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association board. They are at Queen's Park today for their Queen's Park Day. They're hosting a reception at 5 o'clock in the dining room. Come say thank you to the pharmacists for the great work they do.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to also introduce the most trusted profession, voted continually, the pharmacists of Ontario. In particular, Phil Hauser is here visiting. He came to Queen's Park earlier this year, and he's back again. Thanks for coming, guys.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to welcome Marita Tonkin from my riding. She is the chief of pharmacy practice at the Hamilton Health Sciences and is here with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association this morning. Welcome.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome from my riding of Sarnia–Lambton, Darryl Moore, past chairman of the OPA and the owner of a number of pharmacies in Sarnia–Lambton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome Maria del Mar and Sarah Manninen, part of the ACTRA contingent visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine, Mike Cavanagh, who's also a board member of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association here with us today and co-owner of Kawartha Lakes Pharmasave in Lindsay, and he's also a member of the City of Kawartha Lakes Family Health Team—a very busy man. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to introduce a pharmacist from my riding. His name is Carlo Berardi. He owns two pharmacies in Nickel Belt and is the vice-chair of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association and is about to become the chair.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Actually, I'd like to correct the record for the member from Nickel Belt. Carlo Berardi—and we welcome him to Sudbury—is a constituent in the riding of Sudbury who owns businesses in Nickel Belt, and we would like to welcome him warmly to Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting him this afternoon.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to recognize a very special constituent of mine, Peter Zakarow, on his 80th birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I would like a point of order, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm standing, and I'm beating you to the punch.

Today, I would like to acknowledge a guest in the Speaker's gallery, led by the member from Leeds-Grenville. We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from Russia visiting with MPPs. Leading the delegation is the Minister of Culture, Galina Syrovatka; the Minister of Industry and Energy, Oleg Polyakov; the Director of the State Establishment of Culture, Nikolay Syrovatka; and the rest of the delegation. We're glad that you're here with us today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in a ruling made by the Speaker on September 13, he told the Minister of Energy to provide all of the documents related to your government's decision to cancel the Mississauga and Oakville power plants. Mr. Speaker, as you no doubt know, this House has yet to receive all of those documents.

Despite the Liberal House leader's claim that "absolutely nothing was redacted," the member from Nipissing has shown that page after page was blanked out or redacted. Will the Premier now obey the Speaker's ruling and produce those documents so that the people of Ontario can find out what their \$650-million purchase bought them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're going to have a chance—I know we'll have a chance—at committee to address these issues, but the request by the committee and the ruling by the Speaker was worked on by ministry officials and the OPA. Thousands of documents have been provided. My understanding of the approach is that nothing relevant to the gas plant issues was taken out; it's as simple as that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is directed back to the Premier. Premier, both you and the Minister of Energy are lawyers, and you know that if a court orders the production of documents, they have to be produced—period, no question. The Speaker's ruling is no different;

it's clear and unequivocal. In the end, the Speaker stated that the minister had an obligation to comply with the committee's call for these documents.

Premier, why have you abandoned your responsibility, both as a member of this House and as a lawyer, to comply with the rules of this House and comply with the order to report and produce all of the documents to the standing committee?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know we'll have a chance to discuss this and hear more at the committee, which this House has voted these issues go to. I know that the ministry and the Ontario Power Authority worked very hard to provide information—there are thousands of documents there—and they have done that.

This all stems from some very important issues and challenging issues about whether gas plants should proceed in Oakville and Mississauga. It was the position of all three parties in this House—all three parties in this House—that they should not. So we worked hard; we were able to obtain the relocation of those plants; we were able to obtain new agreements. I understand that the communities to which these plants are going are supportive of having these plants; they have energy expertise and they have workers prepared and ready to work.

1040

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again, I'll address my question to the Premier. The order to disclose those documents could not be more clear, and that's why the Minister of Energy has been found to be in contempt. You could have saved a good man's career by taking responsibility for your actions and disclosing all the documents.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

That is not an appropriate comment, and I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I withdraw.

Premier, you could have saved a good man's career by taking responsibility for your actions. Premier, why did you decide to act in your own self-interest and throw the Minister of Energy under the bus? Why don't you—

Interjections.

Mrs. Christine Elliott:—take responsibility for your own actions and not—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: So the House—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will respond to some individuals in a moment when I have attention.

We're at a testy moment, and I believe that it's a test of you, not me, as to whether or not you can withhold your personal comments. I did hear a few personal com-

ments that I would offer a member to withdraw. At this time, I will continue, and now I'm moving into immediately—and I will be very quick to mention the individual by riding. I'd like to get through this.

I also want to make a point that's very important: The committee has been struck, and questions relating directly to the mandate of the committee will be questioned by me first to give you an opportunity to rephrase, if that's necessary, to government policy.

The committee has been struck. It is going to be charged with doing its job according to the motion, and I'll listen carefully—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll finish my sentence: I'll listen carefully to ensure that anything that should be directed to the committee will be directed to the committee.

Now we'll finish by asking the Minister of Energy to respond.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you, Speaker. I know the committee will have an opportunity to consider all of these issues. I know that the ministry and the OPA worked very hard on the documents. If there are specific issues about those documents, they'll address that—they did that.

I think the point is that the documents relate to certain decisions that we made, and governments don't always make easy decisions. Governments make decisions. We listened to the residents of Mississauga and Oakville. We made a decision not to proceed with gas plants in those two locations, two gas plants out of 17 that we've contracted. We made that decision. It happens to be a decision that was supported by both the PCs and the NDP, both of which had been very vocal in their position.

This government made a decision. This government—the cabinet, the caucus and the Premier—made this decision. We stand together on the decision. We always stand together to listen to the people that we're elected to represent.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday in this Legislature, by a vote of 53-50, your government was held accountable for the politically motivated decisions to cancel two power plants. But to anyone watching yesterday's events unfold, during your dog-and-pony show of a press conference and during question period, it was evident you don't understand the severity of your actions. Not only have you failed to produce a complete set of documents, you have failed to answer questions as to why those documents were tampered with, choosing instead to let the blame fall on the energy minister and the photocopier.

You have had every opportunity to take responsibility for the political decisions that you made, decisions that left your cabinet in the dark and your energy minister to find out about your politically motivated decisions in the newspaper.

Premier, how do you expect us to believe your dramatic defence of the energy minister when it was you who put him in that position in the first place?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it's hard for me to believe my ears. We begin with his question. Yesterday, yes, the House agreed that we should have a committee to look into this matter, and he has the gall to stand up here and talk as if the committee has held the hearings and the committee reached a conclusion. I think we should let the committee do its work. I think to stand up in the sort of spiteful, partisan way that he is and cast aspersions upon the Minister of Energy and other members of this crown and hold these hearings on the floor of the Legislature is beneath contempt.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that this was a complex situation, as your ruling put forward. We had two competing interests. The Minister of Energy did his best, and now this Legislature will be looking into it via a committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I don't actually think they heard the question. I asked why the Premier put the Minister of Energy in that job in the first place.

Premier, as you spoke yesterday, it was clear for all Ontarians to see the regret in your eyes. You hung your energy minister out to dry until the eleventh hour before finally choosing to publicly support him. I'm appalled that the Premier would be so self-righteous as to stand in a press conference yesterday and pretend to defend Chris Bentley when he has been the Premier's hand-picked fall guy from the moment he was handed the portfolio.

I'm appalled that this Premier would have the gall to accuse the opposition parties of playing politics when, for the past two years, he has done nothing but play politics, with over \$640 million of taxpayer money squandered.

Premier, if you really cared about your minister, would you stand up and take responsibility for your mistakes rather than make your fall guy take the blame? Will you do that today, Premier?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, how dare he? The fact of the matter is, I come from a world where someone is innocent until proven guilty. This member is standing up here in the Legislature, he is presupposing the work of a committee, and he is casting aspersions upon an honourable member of this House, the Minister of Energy.

He fails in his question to make reference to the fact that this government came forward with a compromise position that would have seen this matter looked at by the committee in a way that was fair and reasonable. What he did was, he stood up and stifled debate by moving closure in this Legislature. He would not allow our members to speak, and he would not allow us to move that amendment so that it could have a proper airing here.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone needs to apologize, it's that member for his attitude and for his approach.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: The government House leader is incorrect. I'm not casting aspersions on the energy minister; I'm casting them on the Premier.

Back to the Premier: You had every opportunity to step in months ago and take responsibility for this scandal on your poor energy minister. If the trembling in your voice and the concern on your face were sincere, it was because you buried a friend, a good man, in a political graveyard for your own selfish interests, and you realized it was far too late to save him.

You were faced with the choice of owning up to your actions and the actions of the Liberal campaign team. Instead, you decided that the minister's political future was worth less than your political legacy. You pull the strings on that side of the aisle, Premier; you make the decisions. If you had told your minister to release the documents, I'm sure he would have.

So, Premier, if you mean what you said yesterday, will you stand up and tell this Legislature that the energy minister was your fall guy and take responsibility for your selfish actions?

1050

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, over and over we came forward with a way to compromise, a way to cooperate, a way to make sure the documents were released, that they didn't jeopardize issues like solicitor-client privilege and commercial confidences. We came forward to this Legislature with an amendment to the motion which would have allowed for a reasonable charge to the committee to look into some very important issues about balancing public interest as well as the right of committees to see documents. And all this opposition did, not only this party but the New Democratic Party, was basically tell us to go fly a kite. They stand in this place and they say that honourable members of this House are guilty until proven innocent.

I think they have some apologizing to do to this Legislature, to the Minister of Energy and to the people of Ontario.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier asked for sympathy for his government as they faced a public shaming over the private power mess that they created in Oakville and Mississauga. I think the question on most people's minds is a pretty simple one: Has the Premier considered showing some sympathy for the families who will be paying the higher electricity bills as a result of their decisions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Families are first and foremost in our mind all the time. Businesses are important as well, because they employ those families. And we'll remember where we were in 2001, 2002, 2003 and, unfortunately, on the edge of our seats for several years after. We had brownouts, we had a blackout; we had a system that wasn't a reliable system. Businesses were

regularly asked to turn down their power use, throwing people out of work.

We've worked really hard over the past nine years to build a reliable system, to bring on the generation we need, so that when we had the hottest five months in Ontario's history, Ontario had enough power. It was reliable and it was almost entirely green.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families are now paying the highest electricity bills in the country, and they're wondering when they'll get some sympathy from a government that's treated Ontario's electricity system like an extension of their campaign machine. People deserve answers, and they, like the Premier, know that the energy minister isn't the only one to blame.

Is the Premier of this province ready to show some leadership, accept some responsibility for these decisions and apologize to the people of Ontario, who will now be stuck paying even higher electricity bills?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I want to thank the NDP for their support on clean air. I know they know, as we all know, that burning coal, which was 25% of our energy use in 2003, not only caused thousands of illnesses but had a \$4-billion burden on our health care system paid by taxpayers. That should factor in. I know they know that the billions of dollars of debt accumulated by Ontario Hydro over the years was because the system had very expensive power, which was being paid for by taxpayers' families as well as ratepayers.

We've worked hard over the years to have reliable power, to have enough power. We brought in the clean energy benefit and we'll continue to have reliance and regard for families and businesses that have to pay the bills and make sure they get the clean energy that they need.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Completing my first series of questions to the Premier, Speaker: He likes to talk about making the tough decisions, this Premier does, but last year, he made the cynical ones and families are now paying the price. People are frustrated that the same government that tells them that times are tough, that tells them that money is tight, that tells them that they understand the struggle to pay the bills, was willing to spend hundreds of millions of dollars and hand it over to private power interests just to win a couple of seats.

If the Premier wants to protect the integrity of his energy minister, he can now show some leadership as the Premier of this province, step forward and take responsibility for this mess. Will he do that?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We've been very clear on this. In the case of Oakville and Mississauga, we listened to the residents. Could we have done a better job of getting the siting right in the first place? Absolutely—bringing together at an earlier stage the willing community and the needs of the electricity system. These were two of 17 gas plants of different sizes that we've sited.

But for the NDP to ascribe the motives to the decision makes one ask what their motives were for supporting the decision in the first place. I don't do that, but it makes one wonder what their motives were, because they supported that decision. The party opposite supported that decision.

I think we should all join together that the reason we supported the decision was that we listened to the residents, the people who elect us, determined it wasn't the right place for the plant, and worked hard to relocate it. That was our determination; it was the right decision.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is more about the needs of the Liberal Party than it is about the needs of the electricity system.

My next question is to the Premier. As the Premier well knows, yesterday's vote was to allow the finance committee to find out the real costs of the politically motivated cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants. This will give the Premier a chance to make it clear who made the decisions and where the responsibility actually lies. Is the Premier going to be willing to tell his side of the story if the committee actually asks him to do so?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I have every confidence that the Chair of the committee and the members of the committee will organize themselves. The committee will begin hearings, as outlined in the standing order. I'm going to let the committee undertake its work and decide how they want to examine this issue.

Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the third party wants to talk about stifling debate and wants to talk about discussion on this matter, then maybe she should stand in the House in her supplementary and explain why they voted against their principles on closure when they knew that we had dozens of members who wanted to speak on this issue, and, more importantly, a matter which I had made public and shared with her House leader, an amendment that we wanted to bring forward, which would have focused the committee's work and would have allowed it to come forward with the types of recommendations that would be of value to this Legislature and of value to committees as we move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the people who pay the bills in this province want to have some answers, and it's clear that the Premier is the one who should be providing them. Documents released from the Ontario Power Authority, the OPA, make it clear that the Premier's office was controlling all aspects of what was supposed to be an arm's-length decision. Is the Premier ready to tell the people of this province, the people who pay the bills, that the responsibility was his for this decision?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, it's always fun to go down memory lane here.

The leader of the third party, Hansard, October 18, 2010: "New Democrats actually have thought for a long time that that plant should never have been built and we've said so."

The member for Toronto–Danforth told Inside Halton: "I don't agree with the Oakville power plant; I don't think it's necessary."

The member for Beaches–East York, December 2: "I'm glad that the people of Oakville came to their senses. I'm glad the people of Oakville hired Erin Brockovich and did all the things that they did in order to have this killed."

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, all three parties agreed that these two gas plants should not go forward. The issue before committee, Mr. Speaker, was balancing the public interest, the taxpayers' interest, with the rights of committee to see documents. That was the amendment that we put forward and that was the amendment that she and her colleagues stifled so that we could not have proper debate here in the Ontario Legislature.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, here's what people tell me is frustrating them. The government that promised to take the politics out of electricity and lower their rates is cutting sweetheart deals with private power companies that leave them paying the highest electricity costs in the entire country. The Premier, who promised—in fact, keeps promising—to make the tough decisions, is avoiding responsibility for a mess that he created. Is he ready to show some leadership and take some responsibility for this mess so that this kind of thing doesn't happen again?

1100

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, this is a little rich, coming from a party that itself has absolutely no energy plan. The fact of the matter is that all three parties in this Legislature were in agreement that the Oakville and Mississauga plants were a mistake. We've admitted that it was a mistake. We cancelled those plants. The minister went before the estimates committee and, as you yourself have ruled, there was a very complex matter: a balance between the public and the taxpayers' interests and the rights of committees to see documents.

The upshot of that, Mr. Speaker, was compromise after compromise that we put on the table in order to address this issue, and we were told by the opposition parties they had no interest in it. They had no interest in protecting the rights of taxpayers.

Now the matter will be looked at by a committee of this Legislature. I think we should allow the committee to look into the matter and to conduct its affairs and report back, and not prejudice what it's going to find.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Even yesterday the Premier was willing to support part of the motion that was before this House, and that was that a committee should be struck to look into this scandal. He

just avoided answering a question, a very straightforward question, from the leader of the third party: Will he agree to appear before that committee to answer for his actions regarding the decisions relating to this scandal?

The Premier refused to appear before the standing committee investigating the Ornge scandal, on two different occasions. I would like to know now from the Premier: Will he stand in his place, agree that he will appear before the finance committee and take responsibility for his role in this scandal?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, the attitude of the opposition has been nothing short of outrageous. The fact of the matter is that we have a committee of the Legislature, which only recently—less than 24 hours ago—has been charged to look into this matter. I think we should allow the committee to do its work. I also think that we should not prejudge what that committee is going to do or find.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, look at some of the things that have come from across the way. The member for Simcoe–Grey asked the Minister of Energy, “Why are you risking it all—your political career, your legal career, your integrity...?” The member from Simcoe–Grey, in this House, talked about “the public shaming they have already received” about breaking the law.

Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous. Let us allow the committee to do its work. To stand in this House and prejudge the work of the committee and to tarnish the name of the Minister of Energy is, quite frankly, unacceptable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, since when is it outrageous for a parliamentary committee to expect a Premier to answer for his actions?

I'd like to read from the Premier's own words yesterday: “Since 1792, through the War of 1812, the industrialization of our province, the First World War, through Prohibition, the Great Depression, the Second World War, a series of minority governments and coalitions in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s which saw government held by all three parties, through the advent of the Internet, through globalization and then our most recent recession”—these were the Premier's words. Well, I say no Premier has ever left such a legacy of disrespect for the legislative process; the obstruction of justice; disrespect for this Legislature—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Frank Klees: I will ask now: Will he admit that he is at the centre of this scandal—

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, he wants to stand up and talk about disrespect. The fact of the matter is, this was a very important motion that was debated by this Legislature. I gave full notice to all members of this House that our party wished to put forward an amend-

ment which would charge the committee to come forward with recommendations that would be important—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'll withdraw.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we came forward with an amendment which would allow a legislative committee of this Legislature to come forward with recommendations that would help all parties function when it came to balancing the public interest and the committee's rights to have documents. We told every member of the House that we wanted to proceed with that, and he and his party stood up and moved closure. They stifled debate in this House. They would not allow us to even move this amendment. And he talks about disrespect.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. The Premier's principal secretary, one of his closest personal advisers, is shown throughout the gas plant documents participating in meetings and steering the ship, but there isn't a single email from him.

When the former principal secretary is asked to testify, will he tell Ontarians how much money the Premier's office was comfortable wasting on the decision to cancel the Oakville power plant?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We have a committee and the committee has a mandate, and I would hope that the committee will do its work. I would expect they would do their work.

There is a lot of discussion in this House about the gas plants, about not proceeding with gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, a decision that both the NDP and the Tories supported. In fact, they were out making a lot of their decision and their determination.

But once you decide not to proceed with the gas plants, everybody knows there's going to be a cost. Everybody knows, because they both won contracts through a competitive process. We worked hard to negotiate a relocation. We obtained a relocation to willing communities and they will provide electricity to the people of Ontario. That's what we're supposed to do once you make the tough decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, it's not good for the reputation of this Legislature for you to ignore questions and pass them along, questions related directly to your office.

The Premier's personal policy adviser on energy is also shown throughout the documents participating in meetings and working with the Premier's principal secretary on the gas plants file, but again, all his emails are missing.

Did the Premier's personal policy adviser tell the Premier how much it would cost to cancel the Oakville gas plant?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Let's be very clear: The memorandum of agreement speaks to the cost. The memorandum of agreement and the result of the negotiations—very hard negotiations that we were very worried about if all the documents were public—were concluded on Monday morning, and we know that the cost of it is \$40 million.

We know that there's an agreement for the same 900-megawatt gas plant to go to Lennox, where there's already an oil- and gas-fired facility, and we know that the net revenue requirement is lower. The cost they'll get for the electricity in the future is lower because of the consideration of the turbines that had already been purchased. That's the agreement. That's the cost. That's where we are.

PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Ontario families are busier than ever, and between work and family commitments, the average family leads a “just-in-time” life. That's what I would call it. And when a loved one is not well, families rely on their pharmacists to provide them with more than just important medications, but also health care advice when they need it.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How are we ensuring that pharmacists who work so close to home in our communities are best able to provide Ontarians with the help that they need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our government recognizes—indeed we celebrate—the role that pharmacists play as full members of our health care team. The enhancements to the practice of pharmacy we've achieved so far would not have been possible without our valued Ontario Pharmacists' Association partners, and we welcome them today to this Legislature.

In 2007, we launched the first professional pharmacy service, the MedsCheck program, and that allows pharmacists to ensure that patients are taking the right medication in the right dose at the right time.

1110

I'm sure the members opposite would like to know what more pharmacists are doing, Speaker. In 2010, as a result of drug system reforms, our government invested an additional \$100 million a year in funding towards more professional pharmacy services.

Speaker, optimizing the role of pharmacists in our health care system is an important part of our plan to improve health care for Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: All of us rely on the advice of local pharmacists to make basic health care decisions, especially when our children are sick or when our parents are using multiple medications. I know that I rely on my pharmacist for advice.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What's being done to maximize the potential for pharmacists in the health care system so that Ontarians can get the greatest

benefit out of their pharmacist's skills and out of their training?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, an important part of the government's action plan for health care is our commitment to better utilize regulated health professionals so they can practice to their full scope of practice. That gives Ontarians better access to better care. It improves the services patients get. They get more timely access to the care that they need. In particular, patients in underserved communities benefit from having expanded access to new and improved health care services.

Every day, about 220,000 Ontarians visit a community pharmacy. They're highly accessible to Ontarians. They're often available in the evenings and on the weekends. In recent decades, the scope of practice of pharmacy has evolved from a model based on filling prescriptions to a model based on using all of their education, their wealth of knowledge to provide better care for people.

I'm committed to working with our pharmacists to optimize their role in our health care system by further expanding their scope of practice. I hope to have more to say about this soon.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Your government has made some very poor choices recently with Ontario taxpayer dollars. You had a choice of whether or not to build power plants in Mississauga and Oakville, and you chose to build. When it became clear that you were going to lose seats in the last election in Mississauga and Oakville, you had a choice. You could have risked losing seats or you could have thrown a Hail Mary pass for your campaign team to cancel the power plants. You chose winning seats. And when this Legislature asked for all the documents about your campaign team's decision to withhold and cancel the power plant, you had a choice: either comply with the Speaker's orders or withhold important documents this assembly asked for. You chose to withhold some very important documents. These are all choices you made, bad choices, costly choices.

The question is very clear. They're very clear. Will the Premier testify at the committee and explain his role in the \$650-million scandal?

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Or will he choose to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I remind the members that when I say “thank you,” that's the end.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: First of all, I disagree totally with the premise of the honourable member's question, and I think it's important that we go back to the history of this issue. The fact of the matter is, the Minister of Energy appeared in front of the estimates committee. Requests were made for certain documents and the Minister of Energy rightly pointed out that there were competing in-

terests here. We had the interests of solicitor-client privilege, something that is protected by the Constitution of Canada. We also had sensitive commercial matters because there were transactions going on, and we also, on the other hand, had the right of committees to ask for documents.

Mr. Speaker, we have spent the last several months trying to balance those interests. The fact is that I went forward to that honourable member's party, as well as the New Democratic Party, with a series of compromises to try to balance those interests, as well as charging the committee that has been—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The only interests they've been trying to balance are their own political interests, Speaker. He'd better start telling the truth, because that's exactly what they're doing with taxpayer dollars.

This Premier knows Ontarians are angry—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think the member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

They've lost all perspective, Speaker. The people of Ontario are angry. They're asking for us to not only have a contempt motion, but they want us to have a confidence motion, because they don't believe them anymore.

If they can't have perspective, let me help them, Speaker. If they can't tell what \$650 million could buy for people in Ontario, let me help them out here. Just for five extra seats in this assembly, this is what they could have spent their \$650 million on: They could have spent on schools that are needed in high-growth areas like Ottawa, Mississauga, Brampton, and Oakville. They could have kept rural schools open in Peterborough, in Kingston, in Blyth, or they could have bought textbooks for students. The so-called education Premier chose to put his campaign team first rather than Ontario students.

So my question is back to the Premier—the education Premier: How can he look at himself in the mirror after having made this decision? How could he have done this at the expense of tomorrow's leaders in this province?

Hon. John Milloy: I would have thought by this point that that honourable member would have learned that theatrics and yelling don't make anything more believable. In fact, Mr. Speaker, when I look at the party of Bill Davis, when I look at the party of Norm Sterling—if you want to talk about being thrown under the bus—I think it's actually quite embarrassing.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me share with the honourable member what the leader of the official opposition said on September 25, 2011: "We've opposed these projects in Oakville and Mississauga." The member from Halton: "I was pleased when" the Oakville plant "was cancelled." The member from Halton, in a press release: "Minister, will you move the Oakville power plant? ... I am asking the minister to consider moving this plant." The member from Haldimand-Norfolk wrote the former Minister of Energy: "The potential for future alternate generation at Nanticoke to replace that slated for the proposed and

disputed Clarkson plant should receive ample consideration."

The facts speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker. Every party in this House wanted the cancellation of that plant, and it's time that the honourable member acknowledged that fact.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I will try again to ask the Premier a question; we will see if we get an answer.

According to the documents, it appears that the Oakville gas plant was cancelled without the input of the Minister of Energy. In fact, we hear that TransCanada "nearly blew a gasket" when they found out the minister knew nothing about the backroom negotiations. So if it wasn't the minister's office, who made the decision to waste hundreds of millions of dollars on the Oakville gas plant cancellation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, notwithstanding—*Applause.*

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Thank you.

I appreciate the support here today, as I do appreciate the support that both opposition parties offered in the strongest fashion with respect to the relocation of these gas plants. Once again I want to thank them. This was a difficult decision, but knowing that we had unanimity in this regard, knowing that we had both opposition parties standing four-square with us in our decision to relocate these plants, made it a little bit simpler.

One of the things I'm looking forward to from the committee—because we provided full disclosure with respect to our costing—is, we're wondering how much it is that the NDP budgeted for the relocation and how much the official opposition budgeted for the relocation. We look forward to getting that information as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In October 2010, the Minister of Energy said, "As we're putting together an update to our long-term energy plan, it has become clear we no longer need this plant in Oakville." Yet we know that in a meeting which included the Premier's principal secretary and the Premier's energy adviser, the decision was made by five people—no public servants. It's clear these five people did not include the energy minister and did not include public servants who put together the energy plan.

Can the Premier tell Ontarians who amongst his staff made the decision to waste hundreds of millions of dollars on the cancellation of the Oakville plant?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the interest shown in these matters, Speaker, but that's exactly why we have a committee, and I think we should let the committee do its work.

But, again, one of the things I would recommend to the committee, given the strong and unanimous support that we shared among all three parties for the relocation of these gas plants, given that the government side has provided full disclosure with respect to our costing, and

in fact actual costs, it would be good to know how much the official opposition and the NDP budgeted with respect to the costing for the relocation of these plants. We all agreed that it was important and in the public interest that we relocate these plants. We did the work with respect to costing, but I think the public deserves to know how much exactly both opposition parties set aside in terms of costing for relocating these plants.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, the week before Thanksgiving is designated as Agriculture Week in Ontario, which means that this year it will run from October 1 to 7. I know that agriculture is important to this province as a whole, as well as my riding of Peterborough.

I want to recognize Mr. Steve Brackenridge, the president of the Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture, and his board for the great job they do to promote agriculture in Peterborough. For example, agri-food is a major contributor to Ontario's gross national product, with Quaker, Tropicana, Gatorade and PepsiCo Foods in Peterborough being good examples.

Ontario farmers produce more than 200 agricultural commodities, the agri-food industry employs more than 700,000 people and Ontario's agri-food exports are growing at \$9.9 billion.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister inform this House how the government is going to acknowledge Agriculture Week in Ontario?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member for his question, and I know all the farmers in the great riding of Peterborough appreciate his ongoing advocacy. He gets it.

I think those farmers would also want to know that since 2003, the McGuinty government has invested more than \$100 million to support local, fresh Ontario food initiatives and to encourage local organizations and businesses to promote and carry Ontario food products.

As Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I've been doing a number of events this week to celebrate local food, starting with opening my own Ancaster Fair in Ancaster; then, on Monday, to a visit Lindley's Farm, as well as the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers trade show; a trip to Everdale farm yesterday, urban farming, farming in the city; and Flowers Canada AGM last night; and to cap it all off—

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: That was a great response. It was a great harvest of information.

I believe Agriculture Week is important, not just for farmers but for all citizens of Peterborough riding. With Agriculture Week being the week before Thanksgiving, it's a great opportunity for everyone to reflect on the importance of agriculture—farmers feed cities—and to

celebrate farmers and their great contribution to Ontario's economy.

Speaker, through you once again to the minister, what can the people of my riding celebrate about Agriculture Week?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: This is a great time to appreciate those who produce food in this great province of ours. I encourage everyone to support our agri-food industry and to buy more of the good things that grow in Ontario. Look for the Foodland Ontario label, shop at one of our more than 200 farm markets, and enjoy a visit to a local farm. Local fare is available at a lot of dining establishments. Look for it.

Choose Ontario wines or craft beer to complement your next meal and, of course, as Canada Flowers said last night, brighten up your table with some bright Canadian flowers.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I just want to note that if we could get Ontario families to shift, not spend more but shift, \$10 a week in their buying habits towards buying local produce, we could increase the GDP \$2.4 million and create 10,000 new jobs.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. Premier, we have heard in this House from your finance minister that your Liberal re-election campaign team was behind the decision to nix the Mississauga gas plant, and yet you allowed your energy minister to take the fall for this scandalous waste and seat-saver decision. But, Premier, we have yet to hear you apologize for throwing a senior minister under the bus. In fact, we have yet to hear any of your caucus apologize to hard-working Ontarians for wasting \$650 million to save your political skin and Liberal seats.

Premier, how do you intend to explain to the people of my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound that you wasted \$650 million to save four Liberal seats but have no money for something as essential as a hospital in Markdale that you twice promised to build?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the budget plan we've laid out and all of the public accounts with respect to this have been tabled with the people. They've been audited by the Auditor General. We look forward to the committee's exploration of these important matters as we move forward. We will continue to provide full disclosure, as we have. I'll remind the member opposite that the numbers associated with Mississauga were fully disclosed to public accounts. Those public accounts were signed off on by the Auditor General.

I'd also remind the member that, as we move forward through committee, we will look forward to having the opportunity to discuss these and other matters, matters that are important to jobs in this province, the kinds of jobs that we need in this province, because that, at the end of the day, is what all Ontarians are interested in hearing us debate—not this stuff, Mr. Speaker. They're

interested in jobs. They're interested in a growing economy. The plan we've laid out is the right plan for a brighter future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Walker: To the Premier again: The reality is that folks in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and across this great province will go without a new hospital, without MRIs, without CT scans, hip replacement, cancer treatment and cataract surgery because you wasted \$650 million. Your government is now synonymous with the most shockingly vile scandals in the history of the province, from eHealth to Ornge to nixed gas plants. Your principal victims are Ontario taxpayers, who sacrifice, work hard and entrust you with their money. What kind of Premier allows \$650 million worth of political interference over new community hospitals?

Premier, will you keep defending your scandal-plagued legacy or fess up and apologize to the communities that go without new hospitals and essential health services as a result of these scandals under your watch?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. Prior to the election, they said to cancel those gas plants, and then they didn't put any numbers in their own documents to account for that. What we do know about their plan is that Don Drummond and others pointed out that they did not have enough revenue built in to meet their targets. What we do know is that they have no plan for jobs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You asked the question. Listen to the answer.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They want to continue to cut taxes further for corporations instead of moving back to balance, instead of making the important investments we need to make in education and health care.

We reject their ideas, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to offer constructive plans to build a better future with better schools and health care for all Ontarians. That's what we're about. It's about jobs. It's about the economy, not about this kind of petty questioning that ought to be dealt with in committee in an appropriate fashion, where the government will defend the decisions—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Health. In May, when asked about approving changes to hospital services in Niagara, the minister said, "We really need to hear from the community before we can recommend anything."

In Dr. Smith's poll, the Pollara poll—he's the government-appointed supervisor—the communities of Welland, Port Colborne, Niagara Falls and Fort Erie indicated that they want hospital services to remain in their communities. I did a health survey this summer as well, to every household in my riding, and the results are equally clear, Minister. My constituents want access to

health closer to their homes. Will the minister listen now that communities have spoken?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I do want to start by saying thank you to Dr. Kevin Smith for going in, as supervisor, to the Niagara Health System. I think he has done, by all accounts, and certainly in my opinion, a superb job in getting the Niagara Health System back on track, for listening very, very carefully to what communities have told him. He has submitted a report. It's a report that I'm reviewing carefully.

1130

I do think it's important that we always keep our eye on what is best for the patients, what is best for the people of Niagara—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do understand that there is not unanimity in Niagara—I gather there hasn't been, and I'm hopeful that there will be a common understanding of what we need to do to move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: My constituents have started to hear about a reckless plan that will slowly remove services from the Welland hospital. This spring—this coming spring, Minister—we're about to lose in-patient mental health services, we're about to lose children's health, we're about to lose maternity services and we're about to lose in-patient women's health issues. This will be felt in our hospital and it will be felt in our community.

So, in spite of no official decision being made yet to shut down the Welland hospital, it is death by a thousand cuts. Is this minister prepared to assure the people of the Welland riding that access to our health care will remain safe?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Dr. Smith has done a very thorough review of services available throughout the Niagara Health System. He has given us some very good advice in his report. We are reviewing those recommendations carefully.

I had the honour of actually visiting the Niagara area recently. I saw first-hand the construction of the St. Catharines hospital. I also visited a hospital in Niagara Falls.

I know how important health care is to all of the people of Ontario and in the Niagara area. We will be guided by one issue only, the one question only: What is the best thing we can do to provide the best possible care to the people of Niagara?

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today I've got a question for the Minister of Economic Development. Research In Motion has been in the news recently, and I'm sure we're all familiar with the challenges they're facing as a company. RIM has helped create a lot of talent in Ontario;

they've had a tremendous effect on the information and communications technology sector. Their success has led to increased success in the sector overall. Many Ontarians are employed in this sector, and they want to know how the sector is performing as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation: Can the minister please tell us how the ICT sector is performing in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member's absolutely right. Our information technology communication sector—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order; it's the second time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yeah, yeah. Something tells me you don't listen to me.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm not sure what's so partisan about great news in the information and communications technology sector but, Mr. Speaker, this is good news. Ontario's ICT sector is now ranked second in North America when it comes to jobs, next to California. We're the third-largest cluster in North America. Ontario accounts for almost half of all of Canada's total employment in this sector, and we manufacture close to half of the products in that area as well, which is great news.

The ICT sector contributed \$28.4 billion to Ontario's economy in 2011—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —and more than 270,000 Ontarians are working in this sector today. We're very pleased and we're very proud of the commitment that we've made to growing this sector in Ontario, and we're very pleased with the impact this sector is having in Ontario's economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the minister for that answer. I'm sure we're all glad to hear that despite the challenges the company is facing, ICT remains vibrant in Ontario.

While it's great to hear the overall sector continues to thrive, I know that many others in this House would share my concern for the workers at RIM. We're always concerned when somebody else loses their job. We don't want to lose the skills, as well, of these tremendously talented individuals.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister please explain what steps have been taken to ensure that the displaced workers at RIM are receiving the support they need at this very difficult time?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There's a lot of good news happening in our ICT sector, but we do know that RIM is going through a very challenging transition right now. This company has done so much to pump up Ontario's economy over the years. We owe a lot to RIM for the work that they've done. At the same time we're very confident, as they go through this transition, that our ICT sector will remain very, very strong in that area. A lot of

it is because of some of the partnerships that we've created there.

I just look to the Waterloo area. I look to Communitech, where we've seen 425 new companies created in that particular facility. We've seen 4,000 jobs created in those companies. That's the way to go: nurturing those start-up companies and doing everything we can to create the next RIM, and I won't be surprised at all if it comes from Waterloo once again.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Premier. Premier, we now know you've wasted \$650 million on buying Liberal seats in the GTA. To get that money, you forced a number of your ministers to sacrifice priorities in their ridings—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I had to kind of process that a little bit, but the accusation is not acceptable. If you would withdraw that, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdrawn.

Take the government House leader, for example: Day after day, he stands in this House defending your Liberal seat-saver program, even though he had to shelve the Highway 7 expansion just a month after you cancelled the Oakville power plant.

Premier, you've already thrown the energy minister—and now the member for Kitchener Centre—under the bus, and you won't even apologize to Ontarians.

So I have to ask: As the Premier of this province, will you do the honourable thing and apologize to your fellow members and Ontarians for deliberately misusing \$650 million of taxpayers' money on your Liberal seat-saver program?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, maybe that member and his party ought to explain why they voted against record investments in new hospitals in the last budget. Maybe the members from Cambridge and other ridings ought to say why they opposed improving hospitals and improving education. Maybe they ought to explain to parents across Ontario why they want to close schools, why they want 55,000 jobs lost in the broader public sector. Maybe they ought to explain why they want to stop full-day learning, something that we on this side believe in strongly.

No, Mr. Speaker. Our plan is the right plan. It was laid out in a budget that that member and his party refused to vote on. Not only that, they removed sections of the budget that were taken right out of their own platform. They are so mired in mud and waste, they're up to here. They can't think straight. They won't represent—

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

Stop the clock.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: In light of the Premier not answering my question, I'll actually direct it right over to

the government House leader because, frankly, Ontarians don't buy what we just heard there.

Minister, your government doesn't even have Highway 7 on the 10-year infrastructure plan, so we know that your latest promise on this project was nothing more than a Liberal vote-buying scheme in the recent Kitchener–Waterloo by-election. Thank heaven there wasn't a power plant in KW, or I'm sure we'd be out another \$650 million—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I'm hearing that again, so you have to be very careful of how you choose your words. You did not choose wisely again. I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdrawn. Sorry—seat-saver program.

Again, I'm happy to know that we didn't have a power plant in KW, or we would likely be out another \$650 million.

Minister, I don't know how you can stand there, day after day, defending the Premier's selfish decision to hang you and your colleague out to dry just so he can avoid taking the fall for the Liberal Party's seat-saver program. I hope you know that with that money you wasted on cancelling gas plants, you could have paid for Highway 7 two times.

Minister, how does it feel to sit in cabinet, abandoning the needs of your riding and the region of Waterloo, just to save Liberal seats in the GTA?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In our budget, the 2012 budget, which that member voted against—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In Simcoe North—the member for Simcoe North voted against \$474 million for the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care. The member for Barrie voted against \$258 million for the Royal Victoria hospital. In Cambridge, the local member for Cambridge voted against the Cambridge hospital re-development.

They call names; they yell names across the floor. They're over their heads in mud; they're over their heads in petty, cheap, political rhetoric. They ought to stand up for their constituents. They ought to lay out a plan like we've done. We're going to fight for that plan and we're going to fight for jobs in their ridings, for better health care and better education, while they drown in their own—

Interjections.

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

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor West on a point of order.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: A point of order: Speaker, questions put during daily question period must deal exclusively with matters that are within the administrative responsibility of the government or the individual

minister addressed. More specifically, a member is not entitled to put a question during daily question period that relates to the administration of a committee.

We know that there has been a matter that has recently been referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Speaker, you referred to this during question period. I direct you to chapter 11 of O'Brien and Bosc. The authors state, "Questions seeking information about the schedule and agenda of committees may be directed to Chairs of committees. Questions to the ministry or to a committee Chair concerning the proceedings or work of a committee ... may not be raised."

As a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, I look forward to appropriate questions and inquiries coming forward at committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. I want to tell the member two things. First, there's a difference between the workings of the committee and the topic of the committee.

Number 2, I had already mentioned earlier that I was listening carefully to how those questions were being put. I did not find any of them to be—well, let me put it this way: Some were close, but I did not rule against that, and I would have done so.

I thank the member for the point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Same point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same point of order, the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, further to this, can you inform the House when the first meeting of that committee is scheduled to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not my purview, and that's not for me to respond to.

This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome Esther Chen, who is a constituent of mine who is visiting us today. She's the mother of page Anna. Welcome to the Legislature, Esther.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today representatives from ACTRA: Rick Howland, Tabby Johnson, David Ferry and Sue Milling. They've been having a great day visiting with all of you.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous présenter M. Éric Desrochers. Éric est un étudiant en science politique et en études internationales au Collège Glendon ici à Toronto.

Mr. John O'Toole: They're not here yet, but I'm also introducing Heather Allin, president of ACTRA, whom I met with just before lunch. I welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: We're full of actors today. It gives me great pleasure, as the Ontario PC critic for tourism, culture and sport, to welcome representatives

from ACTRA: Ferne Downey, national president of ACTRA; David Sparrow, vice-president, member services; and world-renowned Canadian actor Daniel Kash, who many of you remember from movies such as *Aliens* and *RoboCop*. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This morning I did the introduction of the Rutherford family, who are here visiting with Jenna Rutherford, our page. They weren't in the audience this morning, but they are sitting up in the gallery now, so I'd like to welcome them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It appears to me that that's going to be two times that they're in Hansard. Is that correct?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I think, Mr. Speaker, you count the same way I do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm awfully glad that I do.

We welcome our guests.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GEORGE ZEGOURAS

Mr. Todd Smith: It's with sadness that I make this statement today. This week, the city of Belleville lost its longest-serving mayor, one of its great business people and one of the community's most distinctive characters.

George Zegouras was born in Anthohorion, Greece, in 1937. He immigrated to Belleville in 1954. In the 1960s, he and his brother Peter opened Belleville Foods, and he quickly became a small business cornerstone in the Quinte region.

His son, Adam, who is a crown attorney in Belleville, remembered his dad best when he said, "Dad had a smile for everybody." The smile was always on his face—and usually an infectious laugh that would encompass the entire room when he spoke.

In 1980, George became mayor of Belleville, a position he would hold until 1991, then again from 2000 until 2003. He became a driving force behind Belleville's signature waterfront festival during his time as mayor. He was also instrumental in bringing major employers, like the Sears distribution warehouse and Halla Climate Control, to the Friendly City.

He is survived by his four children and six grandchildren. There is some comfort in knowing that he has been reunited with his wife, Diane, whom George loved very deeply.

George Zegouras was a great man in the city of Belleville. He was a great ambassador for the city of Belleville not just across Ontario, but on trips throughout the world as well. He started the twin city program with Lahr, Germany, and also Gunpo, South Korea—and we raised the flag for South Korea here today and made mention of their foundation day as well.

George Zegouras will be dearly missed in the city of Belleville.

ANTI-HUNGER CAMPAIGN

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I'm very honoured to inform the members of the Legislature the details of an innovative campaign that was launched in the city of London this past summer.

On Tuesday, July 31, Mohammad Osman Yassine, president of the Islamic Centre of Southwestern Ontario, announced the launch of the Fast a Day, Drive Hunger Away campaign. This novel initiative asks local Londoners to fast for a day and make a donation to the London Food Bank equal to the amount that they would have spent on food that day. This initiative was pioneered by Imam Munir El-Kassem, who sought to share the traditions and spirit of Ramadan with the broader community, while addressing our social and moral responsibilities to each other.

We know that more than 800 million adults and children worldwide go hungry every day. Indeed, 37.5% of food bank usage comes from children under the age of 18.

I was so very proud of the efforts of this campaign by the London Islamic community and the contributions of local Londoners who participated on behalf of this most noble cause.

Lastly, I am proud to say that the Fast a Day, Drive Hunger Away campaign generated a substantial donation for the London Food Bank and helped many people who were experiencing challenging times.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today to congratulate 14 individuals in my riding of Ajax–Pickering, who were presented with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal on September 5, 2012.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of Her Majesty's ascension to the throne. In honour of the Queen's kindness, spirit and tremendous sense of duty, 14 individuals were presented with medals for extraordinary contributions to my Ajax–Pickering community. These recipients were carefully nominated for their steadfast loyalty and unwavering efforts to improve the Ajax–Pickering area where possible. These recipients range from cultural leaders to selfless volunteers to extraordinary business people and dedicated sports volunteers. There was standing room only overflowing into the next room during these presentations.

Overall, these outstanding individuals are integral parts of my riding, and it is my most heartfelt honour to present you with their names today. They are: Don Terry, William Parish, Ken Brown, Dr. Romas Stas, Arthur Rennick, Mrs. Pat Brown, Anita Witty, Tom Batchellor, Dinesh Kumar, Lucy Stocco, Kazim Qureshi, Abdulkarim Rahim, Alex Bianchi, and Chris Moriah—whose 98-year-old mother was present to witness this special event. We are very proud of our dedicated residents in Ajax–Pickering.

JOSH PHILLIPS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I rise today to recognize an inspiring young man from Renfrew, Josh Phillips. Josh is now 13 years old, but on Christmas Day, 2008, while playing with relatives, he collapsed suddenly. He had lost feeling in the left side of his body. Josh was rushed to the Renfrew Victoria Hospital from where he was airlifted to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, CHEO. He was met by staff awaiting his arrival and immediately underwent tests. On Boxing Day, he was diagnosed as having suffered a brain stem stroke, a rare occurrence in children. Josh and his family were given the news that every family fears: that Josh may never walk again.

I'm happy to report that in the weeks that followed he began to recover. The great staff and physicians at CHEO provided Josh with daily physiotherapy and constant encouragement.

In the weeks that followed, Josh showed signs of movement. During his time spent recovering he was given the nickname the Comeback Kid for his steadfast determination. Josh set a goal for himself that he would walk out of the hospital on the day he was released, and I'm delighted to report that with the help of his parents, Scott and Susan, he did that.

Josh has now been named next year's telethon champion, in the lead-up to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario's annual springtime telethon. I would ask that you all remember and support the telethon next June and that you would join me in wishing Josh a successful and memorable stint as this year's telethon champion—and also for his continued recovery and his courage.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet again, people in Northern Ontario, and more specifically northeastern Ontario, have woken up to more bad news. The government decided that it was going to shut down camping in parks such as Ivanhoe, René Brunelle, Fushimi Lake and other provincial parks across northeastern Ontario. And for some people down here, they may think that's not a big deal, but people living in northern Ontario enjoy the outdoors. One of the ways they do that is to buy campers and bring them to a provincial park or a private park to be able to enjoy the great outdoors.

1510

Once you shut down Ivanhoe, once you shut down René Brunelle, once you shut down Fushimi, it means they really have no other place to go. People have made huge investments—\$30,000, \$40,000—to buy a trailer, an ATV, a boat, the things they enjoy in the summer, with nowhere to go next year.

We say to ourselves, when you have a government that could find \$650 million to save seats in southern Ontario, in Mississauga and Oakville, why couldn't they find literally what is in the tens of thousands of dollars of money to be able to operate provincial parks in ridings like Nickel Belt, Timiskaming-Cochrane, Timmins—

James Bay, Nipissing and other places where parks have been shut down?

I think it shows a complete disregard for northeastern Ontario. The government is yet again showing their disregard for the people of the north, and they'll rue the day that they have done so.

KOREAN NATIONAL FOUNDATION DAY

Mr. David Zimmer: This morning I had the honour of joining the Consul General of South Korea, Mr. Chung, along with many representatives from this chamber and other public officials, to raise the Korean flag at Queen's Park. We gathered to commemorate the legendary founding of the Korean nation some 4,000 years ago.

October 3 is Korean National Foundation Day. It celebrates the founding of Korea. It's also the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Canada.

I want to thank Koreans for all of the work they do in our province. They work hard, they contribute; they've added a tremendous amount to our cultural life, our social life and our business life. In fact, the two-way trade with South Korea and Ontario now is close to \$4.5 billion, and it's growing and growing and growing. Last year, tourism to Ontario, to Canada, from Korea was up some 20%.

I know that all members of this chamber who were at the flag-raising ceremony and then attended the magnificent luncheon hosted by the Korean Consul General were mightily impressed with the food and the ambience. I know, Speaker, you were there. You brought your personal greetings. It was very much appreciated by the Korean community.

SENIOR DRIVERS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to share some very good news for Ontario's senior commercial truck drivers. Last year, when I was elected as MPP for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, I strongly advocated for changes on behalf of drivers and the need to reform Ontario's senior commercial driver's licence renewal program. Since my election, I've met with industry associations, farmers and small business owners, and they've all told me the same thing. There's too much red tape, too many unnecessary regulations, and it's hurting their business and hurting Ontario's economy.

Accordingly, I would like to confirm that as of April 1, 2013, there will be several important changes to Ontario's senior commercial driver's licence renewal program for those drivers aged 65 to 79, including ending the mandatory annual road test and reducing the written knowledge test frequency, from annually to every five years.

I received confirmation from the Minister of Transportation regarding these important changes. In his letter,

Minister Chiarelli agreed that the regulations needed to be changed.

I appreciate the government's willingness to work with me on this important issue on behalf of the people of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and indeed all of Ontario. Most importantly, I am happy that we were able to eliminate some unnecessary red tape and help allow our businesses to continue to thrive and grow in the province of Ontario.

AMATEUR LACROSSE

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, we have a long tradition of lacrosse in Peterborough, a tradition that has seen our teams win over and over again, and this year is no exception. The Mann Cup 2012 series got off to a slow start for the Lakers with a 0 and 2 record, but the fans weren't worried. They were there game after game cheering their team on, and their loyalty was rewarded, as it has been in the past, having won 14 Mann Cup championships. Every player on this year's team is to be commended for their contribution to this victory.

Mike Thompson, their goalie, stopped 38 out of 46 shots in the final game, which earned him player of the game honours.

Led by coach and general manager Jamie Batley and a strong executive and coaching staff, the following players showed just what it means to be a Laker and play lacrosse in Peterborough: Brock Sorensen, Scott Self, Mike Hobbins, Kyle Sorensen, Mark Steenhuis, Mac Allen, John Tavares, Mark Farthing, Scott Evans, Jordan MacIntosh, Josh Wasson-McQuigge, Daryl Gibson, Andrew Sutor, Chad Culp, Chris White, Cory Vitarelli, John Grant Jr., Brad Self, Peter Rennie, Mat Giles, Tyler Carlson, Kevin Crosswell, Andrew Watt, Aaron Grayson, Jamie Lincoln, Mike Thompson, Tracey Kelusky, Eric Bissell, Josh Gillam, Shawn Evans, Jim Purves.

Mr. Speaker, this is the 2012 Mann Cup champions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final statement, the member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm only disappointed that the member from Peterborough didn't mention Ted Higgins, who has held that team together for years.

CARDIAC CARE

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak, but I have a hard time saying that it's a pleasure to do so. Friday, September 28, was the last day for a cardiac clinic located in my riding in Durham region, serving the patients across the region. The clinic offered ICD checkups close to home. ICD stands for implantable cardioverter defibrillator. It's an implant device that helps patients who generally have end-stage heart failure and an extremely high risk of sudden cardiac death because of ventricular fibrillation.

I am advised that this clinic closed because of drastic fee reductions imposed by the McGuinty government in

Ontario. I'm very disappointed and indeed saddened to know that my patients won't get ICD checkups close to home and will have to travel to St. Michael's Hospital, with the stress involved in that travel, or other Toronto hospitals for follow-up.

For these patients, this closure is a bitter pill to swallow. While this government is imposing drastic reductions in fees to support heart clinics, it's indifferent to spending \$640 million for new generating stations that aren't really needed. I believe it is the duty of the government to save lives, not seats.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank Dr. Bhargava and the other physicians for putting their patients and their patients' safety first in my riding of Durham and, I believe, across Ontario.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, I suspect, on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I'd like to introduce Ms. Domna Theodorou, an intern in my office. She is a fourth-year U of T student studying criminology and socio-legal studies and next year plans to pursue her master's in justice system administration. She lives in North York. She's going to be serving in my office, and we welcome her to Queen's Park and thank her for her volunteer efforts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While that's not a point of order, we always welcome our guests to Queen's Park. We're glad you're here.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm very pleased today, on behalf of a good friend of mine, Sister Veronica O'Reilly, General Superior of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Peterborough, to introduce the following bill.

CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH IN CANADA ACT, 2012

Mr. Leal moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr9, An Act to amalgamate The Sisters of St. Joseph of Hamilton, The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of London, in Ontario, The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Peterborough in Ontario and Sisters of St. Joseph for the Diocese of Pembroke in Canada.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

1520

FAIRNESS IN FILM AND MEDIA
PRODUCTION ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ
DANS LE SECTEUR DE LA PRODUCTION
CINÉMATOGRAPHIQUE ET MÉDIATIQUE

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 127, An Act to regulate labour relations in the industries of film, television, radio and new media /
Projet de loi 127, Loi régissant les relations de travail dans les industries du film, de la télévision, de la radio et des nouveaux médias.

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. Peter Tabuns: This bill will ensure that a contract is a contract; that actors, directors, musicians, technicians in the film, television, radio and new media industries can stop wasting time in courts to enforce their contractual rights and instead spend their time creating the art that they can and want to make.

PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT
(ENABLING MUNICIPALITIES
TO REQUIRE INCLUSIONARY
HOUSING), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT
DU TERRITOIRE (INCLUSION
DE LOGEMENTS ABORDABLES
PAR LES MUNICIPALITÉS)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend the Planning Act with respect to inclusionary housing /
Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire à l'égard de l'inclusion de logements abordables.

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.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Section 34 of the act is amended to allow the councils of local municipalities to pass zoning bylaws, to require inclusionary housing in the municipality by mandating that a specified percentage of housing units in new housing developments containing 20 or more housing units must be affordable to low- and moderate-income households. New section 37.1 of the act deals with inclusionary housing bylaws in greater detail. Section 51 of the act is amended to allow the approval authority to impose, as a condition of approval of a plan of subdivision, a requirement that a specified percentage of housing units in new housing develop-

ments in a subdivision containing 20 or more housing units must be affordable to low- and moderate-income households.

It's the third time I've introduced this; third time is the charm, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll bet you that wasn't in the explanatory notes.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Natural Resources on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Everyone in northern Ontario is very excited about the purchase of the Terrace Bay mill by the Aditya Birla Group from Mumbai, India. We have some of their key people here today, and I want to introduce them quickly, if I may. Mr. K.K. Maheshwari, Vijay Kaul, Vinod Tiwari, Giovanni Iadeluca and, of course, Frank Dottori—let's welcome you. Thank you very much. Great stuff in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, to be balanced, that is not a point of order. But we welcome our guests to Queen's Park, of course.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH
MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES FEMMES

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I am pleased and honoured to rise in the House today to recognize October as Women's History Month.

Je suis très fière de célébrer les réalisations et progrès remarquables accomplis par les femmes dans le monde entier et ici même.

I'm so proud to celebrate the tremendous strides and achievements made by women around the globe and right here at home. Strong women mean a strong Ontario.

As minister responsible for women's issues, it gives me great pride to speak to what women in our province have accomplished. As we make this progress, we create a brighter future for women and for Ontario.

As recently as 84 years ago, Canadian women were not considered persons. The fact that there are women alive today who, such a short time ago, were not considered persons is one reason that we have Women's History Month in Canada.

The 2012 theme is something that resonates with me both in my role as minister responsible for women's issues and Minister of Education. The theme is Strong Girls, Strong Canada: Leaders from the Start. It's a theme that honours another very special occasion this year during Women's History Month: the first-ever International Day of the Girl on October 11. Canada was a leader in the campaign for this new day to raise aware-

ness of the challenges girls face around the world and to encourage action. This gives us all an opportunity to recognize girls as leaders.

One recent story of a very special girl who showed extraordinary leadership is 14-year-old Annaleise Carr, who, this summer, became the youngest person to swim across Lake Ontario. Annaleise helped raise thousands of dollars to send kids with cancer to camp. Annaleise's role model was Marilyn Bell, who 50 years ago, at the age of 16, was the first person to swim Lake Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, notre province a eu la chance de compter de nombreuses pionnières de tous âges qui ont établi des normes d'excellence et continuent de nous inspirer aujourd'hui.

This province has been blessed with many female trailblazers, of all ages, who set the standard and still inspire us today. Just this week, Ontario and Canada were saddened by the loss of Barbara Ann Scott. In 1948, she became the only Canadian woman to win an Olympic gold medal in figure skating. During her professional skating career, Scott's contract stipulated that a portion of her earnings went to support disabled children.

Women like Barbara and Annaleise, separated in age by decades, are exceptional role models for Ontario girls. I'm proud to live in an Ontario where girls like Annaleise are able to write their own history. Every one of us has a role to play in moving our society toward full equality for women.

Pendant le Mois de l'histoire des femmes et la Journée internationale des filles, je vous invite à célébrer le rôle de chefs de file des filles et des femmes de notre province.

During Women's History Month and on the International Day of the Girl, let us celebrate the leadership roles of girls and women in this province. I encourage every member of this House to continue to work towards equality for all Ontario girls and women.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS
ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES
FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: J'ai le plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui dans cette Assemblée, pour la troisième année consécutive, pour souligner le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes que l'on a célébré la semaine dernière, le 25 septembre.

As you will recall, the act instituting a day to pay tribute to Franco-Ontarians was passed in 2010 with the unanimous support of Ontario's three political parties. Dear colleagues, it is a symbolic day, of course, but above all, it is Ontario's official recognition of the fundamental contribution made by the province's francophones to its economic, social and cultural prosperity.

Le 25 septembre dernier, à l'occasion de cette journée spéciale, j'ai eu le privilège de remettre les Prix de la francophonie 2012 à trois personnes exceptionnelles qui

ont grandement contribué au bien-être ainsi qu'à la vitalité de la francophonie ontarienne.

Je profite donc de l'occasion pour féliciter à nouveau, aujourd'hui, devant cette Assemblée, Gérard Lévesque, qui a remporté le prix remis à un francophone; Alex Munter pour le prix remis à un francophile; et Danielle Blais pour le prix remis à une jeune francophone.

Nous avons célébré les accomplissements de trois individus qui ont contribué, à leur manière, au développement continu de la communauté francophone. Nous avons aussi célébré les progrès remarquables de la francophonie ontarienne.

Depuis 2003, fort de la confiance qui lui a été accordée, mon gouvernement travaille sans relâche afin de s'assurer que les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes puissent justement jouer un rôle de plus en plus significatif dans le développement tout entier de la province. Pour y arriver, nous avons adopté une approche systémique visant à maximiser l'impact de nos actions dans la prestation des services en français à l'échelle du gouvernement mais aussi dans les secteurs clés de l'éducation et de la santé.

1530

Je suis fière, par exemple, de rappeler que l'adoption du règlement sur les tierces parties en 2011 constitue la plus importante mesure législative depuis l'adoption de la Loi sur les services en français. Sa portée a déjà un impact significatif sur la prestation des services en français en s'assurant que les organismes gouvernementaux ayant recours à un tiers sont en conformité avec la Loi sur les services en français.

Non seulement nous avons 25 régions désignées pour les services en français, mais l'Office des affaires francophones continue sans relâche de désigner des agences gouvernementales et des organismes gouvernementaux. Au cours des dernières années, notre gouvernement a validé 225 désignations, et je peux vous dire que l'Office des affaires francophones continue de recevoir un nombre impressionnant de demandes qui couvrent tous les secteurs des services publics et parapublics.

I am taking advantage of this opportunity to congratulate everyone who works for these organizations and reinforces the network of French-language services across the province.

J'aimerais aussi remercier le Commissariat aux services en français, que nous avons créé il y a cinq ans et qui a déjà produit cinq rapports annuels, un rapport spécial et plusieurs rapports d'enquête qui comprennent des recommandations importantes qui nous ont permis et qui continueront de nous aider à mieux servir les francophones de l'Ontario.

In recent years, we have also confirmed our deep commitment to Franco-Ontarians by significantly increasing funding for French-language education. Since 2003, our investments in this sector represent an increase of \$586 million at the elementary and secondary school levels and more than \$85 million at the post-secondary level.

Par ces investissements, nous favoriserons la pleine participation des francophones au développement de la province et ce, pour des générations à venir.

Notre système d'éducation de langue française a joué un rôle de chef de file dans le déploiement dans toute la province de la maternelle et jardin à temps plein. J'aime rappeler que la maternelle et jardin à temps plein—qui est une priorité de notre gouvernement—est née d'abord dans nos écoles françaises.

Afin de répondre aux besoins spécifiques des francophones en matière de santé, nous avons créé six entités de planification des services de santé en français qui jouent un rôle crucial à long terme sur le développement des services de santé en français. En effet, ces entités nous aident et nous aideront à maximiser l'utilisation des ressources tout en assurant une qualité et un accès accru aux services de santé en français.

A healthy, well-educated francophone population is an asset to the province. I am convinced that our investments in education and health and our community's strong commitment will create a bright future for all of the province's francophones and their families.

Mr. Speaker, in 2012, we have every reason to celebrate the advancement of Ontario's francophones.

Toutefois, alors même que nous sommes en train de redresser les finances publiques suite à l'une des pires récessions que le monde ait connues, les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes comprennent les défis auxquels nous faisons face. Ils sont prêts à faire ce qu'il faut pour appuyer et contribuer à la reprise de l'économie.

In fact, they have already started working to help Ontario achieve its new fiscal objectives. That, too, is what we have celebrated, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to celebrate it every day. We are celebrating a francophone community that is proud of what it is, takes responsibility for its institutions and shows inspiring courage.

Vous savez, je voyage régulièrement dans les quatre coins de la province pour aller à la rencontre des francophones, et je suis toujours impressionnée par leur détermination et leur engagement.

Que ce soit à Mississauga, quand j'ai rendu visite en avril dernier à une de nos équipes de santé familiale bilingues, que ce soit à Sudbury, quand j'ai visité en juin les nouvelles installations du Collège Boréal, ou encore à Temiskaming Shores, où je suis allée il y a quelques semaines à la rencontre des maires francophones, je constate de mes yeux à quel point la communauté francophone de l'Ontario est déterminée à effectuer, avec l'ensemble de l'Ontario, le virage nécessaire pour rétablir la prospérité pour chaque Franco-Ontarien et chaque citoyen de la province.

Partout en Ontario, les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes travaillent, créent et gèrent des entreprises, et contribuent au développement économique. Leur bilinguisme s'avère un atout marqué qui donne à la province une longueur d'avance. Ceci doit être reconnu à

sa juste valeur, et je profite de l'occasion qui m'est donnée aujourd'hui pour les en remercier.

Le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes nous donne, depuis trois ans, une occasion importante de célébrer les avancées et l'apport de la communauté franco-ontarienne. La présence française dans notre province remonte à près de quatre siècles, et nous aurons bientôt une autre occasion de souligner et d'encourager le dynamisme du fait français en Ontario.

Indeed, over the last few months, the Office of Francophone Affairs has started an important process of consulting municipalities as well as community organizations to determine how we will celebrate this 400th anniversary across the province in 2015.

I have the intention to make sure that we seize this opportunity, the 400th anniversary of the French presence, to generate long-term tourist opportunities and promote the francophone and bilingual identity of our province.

En effet, pour conclure, je dirais que l'Ontario doit demeurer une province canadienne où la minorité francophone, comme peuple fondateur, est pleinement respectée et valorisée. L'Ontario doit demeurer le modèle que nous sommes pour l'ensemble des communautés minoritaires francophones au Canada.

J'ai confiance, comme ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, que je pourrai compter sur votre appui pour atteindre cet objectif qui s'élève bien au-dessus de la partisanerie qui anime parfois nos débats politiques.

Et je suis heureuse qu'encore une fois cette année, le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes nous ait permis de rendre hommage à la francophonie ontarienne de différentes façons.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased for the opportunity to rise today on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus to speak on Women's History Month, it being October. In fact, the theme for Women's History Month this year is Strong Girls, Strong Canada: Leaders from the Start and embraces the important roles and contributions of Canadian girls across our country.

Last December, the United Nations proclaimed October 11, 2012, as the world's first International Day of the Girl, which was quickly embraced by the government of Canada.

Around the world, there is a growing recognition that the advocacy and protection of basic human rights for girls is fundamental to the future health of our societies. Of course, in many societies, equal rights for girls have not been the norm, neither historically and not today. Around the world, girls still face higher rates of violence, poverty and discrimination, solely because of their gender.

Canada has been at the forefront of the international community in officially recognizing this day. In Canada

and in Ontario, we can be rightly proud of the accomplishments which many of our young women have made in all endeavours and walks of life. We have witnessed their innovation, energy, stamina and drive through their volunteerism, their unparalleled successes in international sports, most recently in the London Olympics, and their unbridled accomplishments in the worlds of entertainment, business and government.

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To try and list the countless young women who have demonstrated their contributions and accomplishments which have benefited our country, province and communities in so many ways would be an impossible task, but our admiration and appreciation of what they have done, continue to do and will do goes without saying. There is a growing recognition around the world that support for girls and their basic human rights is key for the development and maintenance of healthy communities.

Improving girls' lives has a ripple effect. What is good for them is good for all of us. The International Day of the Girl will further the promotion of equal rights, treatment and opportunities for girls around the world in all areas of life and society, such as law, nutrition, health care, education and the essential opportunity for personal growth and advancement.

I want to offer my personal best wishes to the young women in this province and urge them to never give up on their dreams of being the best that they can be.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS
ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

FRANCO-ONTARIAN DAY

M. Peter Shurman: Je suis très heureux de me lever dans l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage aux Franco-Ontariens et aux Franco-Ontariennes pour l'identification du troisième anniversaire du Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

It is important to remember that our French-speaking community is one of the two founding nations of our province. In fact, we have created a day to celebrate our Franco-Ontarian communities, a flag, and a law to preserve services in the French language.

Here in Ontario, we have taken special measures to ensure that Franco-Ontarians are recognized as a founding nation. The Franco-Ontarian flag was adopted by the French Canadian Association of Ontario in 1977 and is symbolic of our dual heritage.

C'est maintenant une opportunité de donner une reconnaissance réelle, de rendre hommage aux Franco-Ontariens—à peu près seulement 5 % de notre population mais vraiment un partenaire égal dans et depuis notre fondation. Il est important de se souvenir que les objectifs doivent être clairs : de promouvoir la langue française et la contribution de nos concitoyens, les Franco-Ontariens, dans les disciplines variées—

économique, médicale, sociale ou n'importe laquelle. C'est notre devoir; c'est notre responsabilité.

À l'image de la population de l'Ontario, la population franco-ontarienne est diverse et vibrante. Elle accueille, depuis de nombreuses années, des francophones de l'Afrique, de l'Asie, du Moyen-Orient et de l'Europe. Les minorités raciales francophones représentent aujourd'hui plus de 10 % de la population francophone de la province. Alors, nos racines franco-ontariennes sont maintenant vraiment mondiales. Nous avons en Ontario la fierté et la confiance d'être une force majeure dans la francophonie du monde.

On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I offer greetings from our leader, Tim Hudak. We must recognize the special role which the French-speaking community has in the history of our province. As a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I am honoured to stand today and bring greetings on the third anniversary of Franco-Ontarian Day, based on Bill 24, which had the unanimous support of the House when initially proposed.

The Progressive Conservative caucus has always been instrumental in promoting the quintessential role which our French-speaking population has played in creating our nation.

Le dynamisme de la communauté francophone que nous voyons aujourd'hui confirme que la langue et la culture françaises demeurent une partie intégrante et fondamentale de la société ontarienne. Je suis très heureux de me lever et d'honorer le troisième Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes.

Félicitations et merci.

JOUR DES FRANCO-ONTARIENS
ET DES FRANCO-ONTARIENNES

M^{me} France Gélina: Ça me fait plaisir de souligner aujourd'hui, le 3 octobre, la journée franco-ontarienne. Comme dit le dicton, vaut mieux tard que jamais.

Il y a plusieurs dossiers chauds dans la francophonie de notre province, mais pour des raisons qui m'échappent, le gouvernement semble vouloir les éviter.

Dans un premier temps, dans quelques minutes, je déposerai une pétition signée par plus de 5 962 personnes qui demandent la remise en place de la bourse pour étudier en français. Monsieur le Président, les francophones ne montent pas aux barricades souvent, mais pour ce dossier-là, ils l'ont fait. Je vous encourage, d'ailleurs, à consulter le site internet du Regroupement étudiant franco-ontarien, le RÉFO. Les témoignages vont vous convaincre que cette bourse a fait la différence pour des centaines de francophones qui ont décidé de poursuivre leurs études en français. Contrairement à ce que la ministre veut nous faire à croire, pour nous, il est important que les francophones poursuivent leurs études en français.

Mais aujourd'hui, en geste de bonne volonté, le RÉFO demande au gouvernement de désigner 800 des subventions ontariennes aux étudiants des régions

éloignées, subventions qui existent déjà—d'en désigner 800 pour les francophones qui étudient en français. C'est une main tendue que le RÉFO offre au gouvernement, une offre à durée limitée. Ne manquez pas l'occasion.

Le deuxième enjeu est la loi 115 qui a été imposée à nos conseils scolaires. Les francophones de l'Ontario se sont battus longtemps pour avoir des conseils scolaires gérés pour et par les francophones. Cette loi spéciale risque de rendre nos conseils incapables de rencontrer leur mandat. À quoi sert d'avoir des conseils scolaires francophones si en bout de ligne, c'est le gouvernement qui décide comment gérer nos écoles? On ne sera pas plus avancé qu'on ne l'était avant.

Puis, il y a la désignation des régions, comme la ville d'Ottawa ou d'Oshawa. La barre est mise tellement haute pour les francophones; il faut avoir l'appui de toutes les personnes concernées. On ne demande à aucun autre groupe d'avoir 100 %, mais on le demande aux francophones. Pour recevoir la désignation, les groupes de citoyens et citoyennes ont besoin de convaincre tous les décideurs. Il suffit qu'une seule personne s'y oppose pour que ça ne passe pas. Une seule personne peut retenir le processus à tout jamais.

J'en aurais bien d'autres, comme le manque de programmes d'études en français, mais je n'ai que deux minutes et demie. C'est facile de répéter des belles paroles durant les discours ministériels, mais face à la francophonie, les actions parlent plus fort que les mots.

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

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise in celebration of Women's History Month, a celebration because we stand as a party with a woman leader, Andrea Horwath, who might very well become the first Premier of the province to be a woman. I stand in celebration of a caucus that is 44% women and growing. I stand in celebration as the first woman in my family to be born a human person, because my mother was born before 1929, and a woman who fought not only to get the vote, in my mother's day, but who also fought to get sex in the human rights code in my day, because I grew up in a town where there was "male wanted" and "female wanted" in our newspapers.

But I also stand in consternation, because two of the great demands of the 1970s and the second wave of feminism were these: equal pay for equal work and accessible daycare for all, and we still don't have them, Mr. Speaker. Women make 71 cents of every dollar that men make in Ontario. We still don't have equity in pay. We still don't have daycare, and that is an essential necessity for women's freedom. And we still experience domestic violence.

To our daughters and to our granddaughters I pass on the great rallying cries of the 1970s that still have not been fulfilled: equal pay for equal work—let's hear it—and universal and accessible daycare for all who need it. Yes, we don't have that, and we need it.

May it be that our granddaughters don't have to have the same rallying cries that I had as a young woman, and

that finally in this province we get equal pay for equal work and we get accessible daycare for all, and yay, Women's History Month.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present petitions from all over Ontario. This one is from Pamela Vander Byl from Orangeville and Doug MacDonald from Acton. It reads as follows:

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive" history "while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment" of the vehicle; "and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced"—rigorously—"by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of vintage vehicle owners and give it to Christina on her second-last day here at Queen's Park—a sad day.

1550

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Paul Miller: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for" many of them;

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

"Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacy now."

I agree with this and I'll put my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government’s ongoing investment in the RVHS Ajax and Pickering hospital has created an outstanding community health care delivery system; and

“Whereas the Rouge Valley Health System Ajax-Pickering hospital’s 10-year vision plan (as read in the Legislature by MPP Dickson) will be instrumental in ensuring the ongoing needs of the increasing population are met;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, sign this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and ask that the government of Ontario continue to invest in this family-friendly Ajax-Pickering hospital.”

I shall attach my signature to it and give it to Maya.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here to repeal Ontario’s breed-specific legislation, and it reads:

“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, of course, endorse this petition and will pass it off to page Maggie to put it on the table.

BOURSE D’ÉTUDES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai une pétition signée par 6 972 personnes qui vient de partout en Ontario et qui dit :

« Le gouvernement de l’Ontario a récemment aboli la bourse pour étudier en français pour les étudiants et étudiantes ontariens et ontariennes;

« Cette bourse existait depuis plus de 30 ans et plus de 800 Franco-Ontariens ont reçu cette bourse l’an dernier;

« Les incitatifs financiers pour étudier en français sont quasi inexistantes;

« L’accessibilité aux programmes d’études en français reste limitée en Ontario à comparer aux programmes en anglais, c’est-à-dire 22 % des programmes postsecondaires qui sont offerts en anglais le sont aussi en français;

« Les étudiants et étudiantes franco-ontariens et franco-ontariennes doivent plus souvent se déplacer pour poursuivre leurs études postsecondaires dans leur langue que leurs homologues anglophones;

« Les coûts associés aux matériaux didactiques en français sont souvent plus élevés que ceux des matériaux didactiques en anglais;

« Seulement 22 % des diplômés du secondaire franco-ontarien poursuivent leurs études dans un programme postsecondaire en français en Ontario;

« La bourse pour étudier en français est identifiée par plusieurs étudiants comme étant un incitatif clair qui les a amené à choisir une institution postsecondaire franco-ontarienne;

« Pour chaque dollar investi en éducation postsecondaire en langue française en Ontario, 1,10 \$ revient aux coffres de l’État;

« Le rapport Rae de 2005 sur les études postsecondaires en Ontario énonce que les minorités nationales en Ontario, les franco-ontariens et les autochtones, restent parmi les groupes les moins scolarisés de la province;

« L’abolition de cette bourse pourrait mener des étudiants francophones de régions éloignées à poursuivre leurs études en anglais au lieu d’en français »;

Ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario « de réinstaurer, dès la rentrée scolaire 2012-2013, la bourse pour étudier en français. »

J’appuie cette pétition, j’y appose mon nom et je demande à Patrick de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

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 commuters of Orléans and surrounding areas;

“Whereas the federal government has moved almost 5,000 RCMP jobs from the downtown” of Ottawa “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. I sign it and send it forward with Jacqueline.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario’s automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

Thank you very much. I support this and I’m pleased to give it—

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

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr. Jonah Schein: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas extracurricular activities form an important part of our students’ education and benefit communities across Ontario;

“Whereas students and families are paying the price for the unnecessary and cynical political games of this government;

“Whereas we respect teachers and appreciate the time they volunteer to enrich our children’s school experience;

“Whereas the Ontario government should be focusing on improving the lives of young people in our schools and supporting families across this province;

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

“That this government respect the constitutional right of workers to bargain collectively, take responsibility for the crisis they have created in Ontario schools, and take steps to resolve this problem to ensure that Ontario

students can once again enjoy the benefits of extracurricular activities in this province.”

I agree with this. I’ll sign my name to it and give it to page Leo.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Soo Wong: “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

“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 from 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 fully support this petition—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition delivered by Mr. Nicholas DePencier Wright with the Animal Justice Canada legislative fund. It reads as follows:

“Call to protect Ontario’s captive marine animals:

“Whereas recent concern about water quality, chronic staff shortages and poor welfare of Marineland’s animals have led to the inspection of Marineland’s facility; and

“Whereas no regulations exist at the provincial or federal level regarding the care of captive marine animals; and

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“Whereas ensuring the adequate protection of captive marine animals should not be dependent on individual complaints coming forward;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That regulations be passed under the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, RSO 1990, c. 36, aimed at protecting captive marine animals, including regulating how the animals are housed and are treated.”

I support the petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature.

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

“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 and send it to the desk—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the people who live, work and recreate on the Bruce Peninsula have concerns about the expansion of industrial wind turbine farms on the Bruce; and

“Whereas none of these people have been asked to attend meetings or provide input into decisions to expand these industrial wind turbine farms; and

“Whereas these decisions will impact on their enjoyment of their homes and reduce property values; and

“Whereas we believe the industrialization of this beautiful area by the development of industrial wind turbine installations will mean the loss and destruction of

the natural viewscape which attracts tourists and cottagers, resulting in a negative impact on tourist businesses and loss of jobs for the community;

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

“To effect a stay on any expansion of industrial wind farms, other than the existing three, on the Bruce Peninsula.”

Five thousand, one hundred and seventy signed petitions—I support them and will send them with page—

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

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north’s economy; and

“Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

“Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

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

“That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets at Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately.”

I fully agree and send it down with page Sashin.

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 October 2, 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): Further debate? Further debate? The member from Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I take it that the third party and the government aren't speaking to this bill, Mr. Speaker. That's very strange. Of course, strange things happen around this place.

This bill is about the amalgamation of the Ontario electric system operator act—and it combines two organizations.

Any debate in this House dealing with electricity has to really start with Sir Adam Beck. I don't think that Ontario does enough to recognize what a great, great thing Sir Adam Beck did in his day, back in the late 1910s and early 1920s, when he put together a consortium of the Ontario government and created Ontario Hydro, harnessed the power of Niagara Falls, created an electricity grid—in those days, running from Niagara Falls through southern Ontario and along the north shore of Lake Ontario—and, with that grid, created some of the greatest economic opportunities that Ontario has literally lived off for the better part of a century now.

The rural electrification program, which put electricity into most, if not all, farms in Ontario by the mid-1950s, created a strong, vibrant, profitable agricultural sector that was well above the other agricultural areas that we were competing with, because we had electrification on the farms and they didn't. This all came about because of the foresight, the vision and the hard work of Sir Adam Beck. Any debate on electricity in this province should recognize what a great man he was.

This bill that we're debating today—I do have some concerns about this bill. One of the concerns I have is—in the explanatory note, it points out: “The board of directors of” the Ontario Electricity System Operator “is required to ensure that there is an effective separation of functions and activities of the OESO relating to its market operations and its procurement and contract management activities. The OESO is prohibited from conducting itself in a manner that could unduly advantage or disadvantage any market participant or any party to a procurement contract or interfere with, reduce or impede a market participant's non-discriminatory access to transmission systems or distribution systems. The board of directors is also required to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.”

In the body of the bill, this goes on in section 6. Subsections (a) to (r)—that's 18 subsections—deal with the ability of this organization to operate above the fray. In other words, there would be no hanky-panky with the cost of electricity. That gives me concern, particularly when governments have been far too involved in the operation of the electricity system, deciding where plants go and where plants don't go. Those have been all political decisions. Politicians have not stood back and let the operation of the Ontario electrical grid be done by experts. They've been involved themselves. Yet there's this huge section in this bill that's trying to deal with making sure that the price of electricity is not manipulated in any way, shape or form. That gives me concern, when this government has had a rather poor record in that area.

The other thing that gives me concern is, when you get to section 18—after going through 18 different sections that provide for the operations to be done legally and up front and transparently, then there's section 18, which is a liability clause. I suppose that if someone does step over the line, they'd be brought to order.

It says here in the liability clause: “No action or other civil proceeding shall be commenced against a director, officer, employee or agent of the OESO or a member of a committee or panel established by the board of directors of the OESO for any act done in good faith in the exercise or performance or the intended exercise or performance of a power or duty under any act, the regulations under any act...”

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In other words, if they do something untoward—there are 18 clauses in here that say you can't do anything untoward; you should not do anything untoward. But if you do happen to do something untoward, you're exempt.

I just don't like the way the bill is written. I have great concern about going to all this length to make sure that integrity in the system is maintained, and then the liability clause exempts everybody from everything. Even the part-time employee they might hire as a consultant is exempt, too, because he was part of a panel. It just doesn't—what did the Auditor General say? It doesn't pass the smell test. So that gives me a great deal of concern as to where this bill is going and what its intentions are. I'm concerned about that.

We also have some great concern that the Ontario Power Authority is going to be merged into this body. We don't think it should be merged; we think it should be scrapped altogether. This is a body that was formed seven years ago. There were 15 people on this board, and it was a transitional body created by this government to manage Ontario's energy supply. That transitional body was to disappear once the transition from the old system to the new system was completed, but it didn't disappear. It started with 15 members; it now has 235 people on a permanent entity. There are 87 people who earned over \$100,000 a year. The CEO earns \$570,000 a year. This is a transitional body. So it hasn't been a transitional body; it has bloated itself out of control.

That's a mentality that embeds itself in an organization, and if that organization is merged with another organization, which is what this bill purports to do, the entire organization is going to take on this bureaucratic bloating of high-priced individuals who basically are making a job for themselves.

Shuffling bureaucrats down the hall and creating one super-agency certainly won't accomplish the saving of any money. The government says this is going to save us \$25 million. I will guarantee this government—I will guarantee you—that this will not save \$25 million. In fact, I will guarantee you that three years down the road, this organization will have bloated its costs, I'm going to say, 15% or 20% more than they are today, and it could very well be 25% or 30%. That's a pretty safe bet, given

the way a bureaucracy bloats itself every time you turn your back on it. Creating an organization that is going to take these high-priced, and I'm sure highly experienced, individuals and put them together—they are going to bloat the cost of this organization.

It's obvious to me that Liberals, who have bloated the size of the civil service, adding 300,000, 400,000 people to the public service of Ontario—increased bureaucracy is not a problem with them. It's a great problem for the people of Ontario, because this impacts the cost of electricity, it increases the cost of government and it increases the cost of everything we pay for. Only under this government could they take a 15-member transitional body and bloat it into a mega-bureaucracy where over 87 people earn \$100,000 a year or more. This government thinks that by merging they're going to save some money. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, there's not going to be any money saved in this merger.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to rise on the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act bill and respond to some of the comments by the member from Halton. I'd like to commend him on starting off this debate today about Sir Adam Beck, a man who fought private power interests and a man who realized that public power, power that was meant to benefit all and benefit all industry, was the future for Ontario. It was through him that the great utility that built this province, Ontario Hydro—it was due to his foresight that we witnessed and we were part of the revolutions that were made. Sadly, I think both of the other parties have forgotten, in their terms in office, that it was public power that made Ontario great.

This bill takes the OPA, which manages the private power contracts, and merges it with IESO, the people who regulate the power. That actually makes some sense: the people who buy the power merge with the people who regulate the power. But once again, they're making even less public participation, because under the old—the OPA had to go through the Ontario Energy Board to at least explain their power plans, and the people had a chance to go to a hearing and test those plans. In this act, they're ministerial plans, and there's no place for the public to participate.

We have all seen the mess that we've gotten in the power industry when ministers and politicians get involved in power plants.

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

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise in this House and speak about Bill 75. I commend the honourable member from Halton for talking about Sir Adam Beck, who was a remarkable person in the history of electricity generation in this province. We all know that he was the person who created Ontario Hydro; he was the person who created the largest and the first publicly owned utility in the world. He was a remarkable person; there's no question about that. Yesterday in my

remarks, I asked every member of this House, when they are walking along University Avenue, to stop for a moment beside his statue and to pay respect to this great Ontarian.

Our government has been following the path which was created by Sir Adam Beck in terms of creation of hydroelectricity. In Niagara Falls, the biggest tunnel in the world is under construction, which is going to produce enough electricity to light and to provide power for 160,000 homes for 100 years to come. This is one major project in the area of hydroelectricity we have been engaged in. The other project is the Lower Mattagami hydroelectric facility in northern Ontario, which is going to produce 400 megawatts of power—clean power, reliable power and inexpensive power. That is going to provide electricity for 15,000 homes. These are the projects under way in the area of hydroelectricity.

Actually, hydroelectricity is providing about 22% of our generation this year and next year, so we are doing quite well in that area.

Sir Adam Beck, as I said, was quite exemplary for our electricity generation and also power production in this province's—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It was a pleasure listening to the member from Halton. I think he summarized the argument. I refer people to the Hansard to make sure they have copies of it. There's a full description of the mess they've made of the energy system in Ontario. It's quite deplorable. It's not just on these gas-fired plants—there are five gas plants in Ontario that aren't working. They're being paid millions of dollars to produce.

The tribute to Adam Beck is a wonderful thing. The policy in Adam Beck's book was power at cost. Really, what he meant was power at any cost. It was a direct subsidy to the manufacturing environment in Ontario—that he was setting it up.

Here's the issue. On energy, the monopoly is the lines. That's the monopoly. That's the public piece. Half the system today is private—the Bruce plant is private—and there's nothing wrong with that. They make an economic business case to finance it and are paid for it. Most of the gas plants—TransAlta—are all private.

This governance model they've set up, the OPA and the IESO—they were temporary agencies. Now they've become big, bloated bureaucracies.

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Our leader, Tim Hudak, has made it very clear that we would have eliminated the bureaucracy and made energy safe, reliable and, most important, affordable, because energy is an essential commodity for the consumer. You can't live without it, so it has got to be affordable for seniors, persons with special needs etc. They are now pricing seniors out of their home. That's the plight of nine years of a government that couldn't manage a two-car funeral.

I am so disappointed and shocked by everything they've done on the energy file. It's an embarrassment to

Ontario. Adam Beck must be rolling over in his grave, listening to these people that couldn't—they can't run this place. Look, they're almost in contempt of the place on a daily basis now.

I'll speak more, later on today. Stay tuned.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to rise for the first time and speak to this bill today. Actually, I agree with a number of issues, the speaking points, that the member from Durham has mentioned.

Clearly, under cover of Bill 75, designed to implement the merger of the OPA and the Independent Electricity System Operator, the government is also making wholesale changes to the way that energy is planned for and is procured in the province of Ontario. It's true, though, that the NDP does support the consolidation of Ontario's fragmented hydro agency system and agrees in principle with the government's intention to reduce and eliminate waste by merging the two agencies. I mean, on the surface, that makes a lot of sense, and I think even the public understands that it makes some sense.

However, the way that they've gone about doing this in Bill 75, by removing the independent planning and review required by the present supply planning regime—this is something that the NDP clearly does not support, and clearly members of the official opposition have issues with it as well.

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, opportunity for public and stakeholder participation in energy planning is greatly reduced. This should be a concern for everyone in this House. I think that the energy portfolio is high on the minds of Ontarians these days, and we have to make sure that this bill serves the needs of the people that we're elected to serve in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Halton has two minutes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would agree with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo that electricity should be on the minds of all members of this House. We're pricing ourselves out of the market. The member from Durham talked about seniors not being able to afford their power bills. Those are huge concerns.

The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, thank you very much for your kind comments. Certainly, Adam Beck was a giant in the history of this province.

I thank the member for Richmond Hill for his comments, although I have to point out to the member for Richmond Hill that the Niagara tunnel that you're talking about is a huge project. It's a year and a half late, and it has almost doubled its budget, so it has not been well managed.

This government paid a company a huge amount of money to drill test holes, to find out what kind of rock they were going to be going through. They came back with results that said, "You're going through limestone."

By and large, they were going through limestone, but unfortunately, every once in a while, they hit some shale, and when you hit shale, it caves in. So they had to go to a very expensive process of creating a cement tunnel to hold up the shale and the roof of the project. The testing that was done—with millions of dollars being spent on that testing—didn't identify the shale. The testing was done in a shoddy manner—overpaid for, not properly done.

This government is responsible for that shoddy work that was done, that has cost the taxpayers of Ontario, through their electricity system, huge amounts of money for a system that is going to produce electrical costs at well beyond the scheduled price. It's too bad, because it could have been done in a much more practical and efficient manner than was accomplished by this government.

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

Mr. Peter Shurman: Ordinarily at this point, as I begin what I have to say, I'd use the stock phrase that everybody does around here about what a pleasure it is to add my voice to the debate on whatever bill. In this particular case, it's Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012, and I would say that, except it's no pleasure. It's no pleasure because I've taken a look at this bill, which has been around since the end of April, and I don't think, frankly, that it's worth the paper it's printed on. But debate on this bill is an opportunity to discuss some priorities of this Liberal government. More accurately, the Liberal government's complete lack of priorities is why I'm here debating this nonsense.

This is one of four bills left on the docket that are all in the waning days of debate. There is no new legislation being introduced. The government is obviously seized of a problem that it has that, while it pertains to energy, doesn't particularly pertain to this bill, and it's pre-occupied with that rather than dealing with the exigencies of the people of Ontario.

Fifteen hours to date have been spent on a bill—this bill—that was introduced last April, as I said. It's a bill that is designed to save \$25 million; \$25 million in the overall scheme of things deserves a bill. Fifteen—now going on 16—hours of debate makes me ask myself about this valuable time and how much better it could be spent assisting Ontarians, but never mind.

Since the spring, we have been debating Bill 75, and this is a bill that seeks to merge the Ontario Power Authority with the Independent Electricity System Operator, or IESO, into one giant entity. The Ontario Power Authority was created about eight years ago—2004. It can be viewed, if you will, as the beginning of the McGuinty government's energy experiment or experiments that have together cost Ontarians millions of dollars. I say "millions of dollars"—really, hundreds of millions of dollars, and if you're really honest about it, billions of dollars. Included are countless wind farms and solar parks and rooftop arrays, contracts for endless supply that pay too much money for power that is not stored and is

therefore virtually given away with some regularity, when Ontario is actually home—and people don't generally talk about this here in this place—to what is arguably the world authority on hydrogen storage, a means and ultimately the means of storing renewable power, which right now, as I've said, we have to give away.

The Green Energy Act—debated here a couple of years ago—comes to mind because it was a lengthy and a very rancorous debate. At that time, I remember questions being asked repeatedly of the then energy minister—not to say “energy czar” at the time. He insisted that the Green Energy Act in totality would not really amount to more than about a 1% rise in the electricity bills of consumers in the province of Ontario. We're talking about individual residential bills as well as business bills.

Take a look at your bill, folks, whoever you are and wherever you are, whether you're in a business or whether you're in a home. Take a look at your bill when you sit down at the kitchen table tonight, and decide whether or not you can afford that.

At the time, the government claimed that the OPA would be a 15-person transitional body—I say “transitional body”—charged with managing Ontario's energy supply. Premier, can you say “transitional”? What is it about the word “transitional” that you don't understand?

What management this has turned out to be. Under the supervision of a variety of ministers, the OPA has presided over continuously rising energy costs. In this time, Ontario has been producing more energy than it needs, selling that energy at a loss to other jurisdictions, and making the taxpayers cover the difference. So much for 1%. Don't believe me, folks; like I said, look at your power bill. Pull it out and take a good look at it tonight. It is not just a misadventure—the energy experiments of this government. It is a business aversion from Ontario, and it is a family fear factor: That's what energy has become in the province of Ontario. What a quintessentially Liberal action plan: When in doubt, make Ontarians pay. And pay, they are.

Over the past seven years, the OPA has ballooned from a 15-person transitional body to yet another giant drain on taxpayers, employing 235 people permanently, with 87 of them earning upwards of \$100,000 and the CEO's salary set at \$570,000 per year. But don't worry, Speaker, the Premier has frozen that salary and there won't be any bonus—oh, well, there goes the Caribbean vacation. These are, after all, difficult economic times and we all have to do our part. This is a so-called transitional body that cost taxpayers \$375 million, with their expenditures rising from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today.

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Here's a question for you, especially those of you who are watching on television: How has your household income done since 2005? That's what you have to ask. We're debating a bill that would put these two burgeoning organizations together in one, and we would save \$25

million if we can believe what this bill purports to represent.

Since the introduction of this bill, significant facts pertaining to the Minister of Energy and the government's energy policy have come to light. To the figures I mentioned above, we can now add \$650 million that this government wasted on the non-existent power plants in Mississauga and in Oakville. It reminds me of \$35 million that was spent on a bridge that was never built to the Toronto Islands by one-time Mayor David Miller. It's not there, that bridge, is it?

In total, this government presided over an energy experiment that is costing taxpayers, as I've said, in the billions of dollars. This so-called energy policy has been passed from minister to minister like a baton of shame in a relay race to nowhere. Now, after billions of dollars wasted, Ontario is no closer to a sustainable, reliable green energy sector than it was eight years ago. It's sad, too, because it could be. It could be.

We, on this side of the House, have been demanding that this government take Ontario's critical financial situation seriously. We have said that half measures don't pass muster. We have proposed solutions, and we've asked the Liberals to, please, cut their spending. In response, they table a bill like this, Bill 75, which they claim will save taxpayers—drum roll, please—\$25 million.

How are Ontarians to believe that their government is looking out for their best interests, that they understand the critical nature of the situation in which our province finds itself when, in view of wasting billions, the Liberal response is to start with policies that will supposedly result in \$25 million in savings? Good God, they haven't even got a legislative roster—as I've said, four bills on the docket. We're marking time and, folks, Ontario is burning.

I used the word “supposedly” because I have serious doubts that we will see any savings as a result of this bill. Savings as a result of this bill—don't believe it for a second. You see, this government wants us to believe that, as a result of the amalgamation of the OPA and the Independent Electricity System Operator, they will be giving us two agencies—a procurer and a marketer of energy—for the price of one. By the way, its acronym is OESO, O-E-S-O. It's pronounced “oh-so.” That's “Oh, so good, don't you think?”

History tells us, however, that in true Liberal fashion this government will create one agency for the price of two, maybe three, maybe four. Only this government can justify keeping a black hole of spending like the OPA in existence, no matter what its form, no matter what it's called. Had the minister been serious about a solution, he would have proposed a bill that would eliminate the OPA altogether. He would also push his government to do what we've been asking for for years, and that is, the complete review of each and every single government agency with the goal of fixing those that don't work and eliminating those that aren't necessary. Instead, we get another meaningless bill.

They like to say that we left the grid in disrepair. It's not so—oh, so not so. There may have been brownouts. That's true, but back then, unemployment wasn't chronically at 8%, and we actually did have heavy industry and jobs in the province of Ontario that consumed electricity, and oh, prices were oh so much lower.

So this bill, I'm here standing and talking about it, but this bill has no legs.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I remember actually being on Welland city council and being the mayor of the city of Welland during some parts of deregulation. I also remember sitting on the hydro board, as a member of the hydro board, before deregulation, and rates were oh so much lower even then than they were, frankly, under the Harris government.

Then I heard the member from Halton speaking about the current CEO making in excess of \$400,000, and 87 or 100 employees making over \$100,000. Certainly, our party platform—we've been saying all along during this last year that we think CEO salaries need to be capped.

However, that brought to my mind, when he was talking about that, the name Eleanor Clitheroe, so I googled her. She, of course—

Interjection: Didn't we get rid of her?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, you got rid of her.

She, of course, was the CEO of Hydro One at the time. She got hired under the Harris government, and I think she got fired under the Eves government, but not until she had made \$2.2 million. Today, she is still trying to increase her \$25,000-a-month pension to a \$33,000-a-month pension—for somebody who only worked a couple of years at Hydro One.

Interjection: She's a pastor now—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes.

CEO salaries need to be capped. Hydro was far better off before it was deregulated. This bill is doing a little something to perhaps try and save some money and to get some efficiencies. But this whole deregulation thing made a few people rich, and it made the rest of us pay much higher hydro bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Comments?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I did want to make a brief comment. As mayor of the city of Ottawa for six years, I was an active board member of Hydro Ottawa. For two and a half or three years before I came back to this place in a by-election, I was a member of the board of IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator.

It's a very complex business. One of the responsibilities of the IESO is to manage the import and export of electricity. It has a legal relationship with all its adjoining jurisdictions: Manitoba, Quebec, New York, Michigan. Ontario is part of that, and there are legally enforceable rules in terms of how they move electricity and support each other when they have shortages or surpluses of electricity.

Just to correct the record, Mr. Speaker, on the issue of importing and exporting electricity from the province of

Ontario and into the province of Ontario: Yes, there are times when we have given it away and we sell it away at less than the cost of production. But on the other hand, we also sell it often at profit. For all of the three and a half years that I was a member of that board, we had a net profit on the import and export of electricity of \$400 million, cumulative, over those years. IESO has generally created a profit for itself on the import and export of electricity.

It's very easy to create an urban myth when we know that we're giving or selling it away cheap, and not putting in the other side of the equation when we sell it at a profit. When you match the low sales to the positive sales, the IESO has had a spectacular record of creating a profit for the benefit of the IESO and for the benefit of the province.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have to say, just briefly, on this Bill 75, I can't believe the gall of the energy minister to continue to have this bill on the floor of the House, especially after all that has been going on in the last number of weeks regarding the fiasco in the energy business, the energy policy, with this Liberal government.

We can see how these boards were constructed to provide some arm's-length distance from ministerial or political interference or influence. I'll speak more about this when it's my turn for debate, but this bill goes directly—I would say it's nefarious in its wording. It's deceptive in its application. This bill says that the minister will provide all the influence and interference in the direction of energy policy. It also shields the minister from any scrutiny. Even the regulatory component of this bill, the regulations, are deemed not to be regulations, so that the Legislature does not have any oversight.

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It also goes so far as to prevent the Statutory Powers Procedure Act from being applied to this new monster ABC that's being created, and it also prevents any remedy through the civil courts for any of the actions by this agency. I really would like everybody on the Liberal benches to read this bill. Forget the talking points; put the talking points away. Read the bill and see what you're creating. You're creating another fiasco.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, it's fun getting up and talking about the bill. It's important to state some of the highlights and good points about this bill, which is an attempt at consolidating some of the services and administration costs. Those are some of the things we were successful in actively campaigning on. It's a good idea. It's a good initiative. It's something that is tangible, that will definitely bring savings to constituents back home. People understand repetitive services, and if you eliminate some of it, it will bring some savings. The actual dollar figure that those savings are going to bring is something we can actually discuss if we can get this bill moved into committee.

The biggest concern that happens in this proposed piece of legislation is the removal of the independent planning and review board. That's the biggest concern that is happening here. We shouldn't be excluding the public from providing their input in this entire process. We should be encouraging that. I find myself repeating myself; I think I heard myself say this about three times, and I'm saying it in a different way. Anyway, we should be bringing more people to the table and not excluding them, so we can scrutinize some of the actions that are happening here by this government and through this process.

But no, what we're doing—and what we're not learning—is once again we're giving more powers to the minister to make some of these decisions. What has happened in this House over the past three or four weeks—haven't we learned from that process? We really need to look at getting this right. We have the opportunity of doing it.

Mr. Speaker, again, it's a joy. I think I'll have another opportunity to speak about this today, and I look forward to that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Thornhill has two minutes.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you as well to my colleagues from Welland, Algoma-Manitoulin, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and to the Minister of Infrastructure for their comments. In response to what the member from Algoma-Manitoulin has to say—he talks about liking the idea of consolidating for saving money. Frankly, so do I. This, however, is a drop in the bucket at best, and at worst it's nothing. When you go and do this kind of consolidation, the question becomes, what is it that the consumer saves, versus what the consumer has spent on the experiments of this government in the green energy sector and on buying power stations that aren't really there?

Add those kinds of things and the global adjustment—things like that and the HST—to the power bills of the average Ontario business and the average Ontario resident and you've got a disaster on your hands. I suggest that we do. He also talks about what we're going to do about getting the bill into committee. I would ask the same question, because it's pretty hard to get a bill into committee when you don't have any committees.

As far as the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is concerned, he calls the bill—I think the word was “nefarious.” I don't know if I can exactly concur on the word, but I can certainly agree with my colleague that this is a difficult bill to comprehend in terms of why it's here, which was the substance of what I had to say.

The Minister of Infrastructure talks about the fact that from time to time we sell electricity out of the jurisdiction at a profit. Since the government has not been able to cap the news leaking out about how many millions we're spending on wasted electricity that we have to sell at a huge loss, particularly on weekends, I would be very interested if you would show us by publicizing

when you actually sell electricity from the province of Ontario at a profit. That's what we have to see. Then we'll start to have a real dialogue about how electricity is created and delivered and sold in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: Bill 75 is before us for debate. I'll start off my comments by saying that effective public policy requires oversight and remedies. This Liberal proposal for an Ontario Electricity System Operator explicitly excludes oversight, remedies and accountability, and in my view it is very deceptive. It would seem that they're setting themselves up for another billion-dollar boondoggle.

The act specifically makes OESO not a crown agency, yet it retains all the authorities, attributes and characteristics of a crown agency. Just for the record, I'll read in the definition under the Crown Agency Act: “‘Crown agency’ means a board, commission, railway, public utility ... manufactory, company or agency, owned, controlled or operated by Her Majesty in right of Ontario, or by the government of Ontario, or under the authority of the Legislature or the Lieutenant Governor in Council.” We'll show that that is exactly what is created with OESO.

OESO, if it's dissolved—the crown assumes all its debts and liabilities. The Liberals can set up a profit for their friends under this bill, but the broke Ontario taxpayer will be left footing the bill.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll refer the members to page 6. Maybe the Attorney General would like to read page 6, sections 7 and 8:

“If the OESO is dissolved, any property of the OESO remaining after the payment of all of its debts and liabilities is vested in the crown in right of Ontario.

“8. The OESO is not an agent of the crown for any purpose, despite the Crown Agency Act.” Specifically, they've excluded it.

Though it's not a crown agency, the minister appoints the board of directors. I'll ask my Liberal friends to go to section 9. OESO's board of directors—“at least eight and not more than 10 additional individuals appointed by the minister.” That's right out of the act, Attorney General. Take a read through it.

Though it's not a crown agency, the Lieutenant Governor in Council can delegate any of the powers to anyone. I'll ask them to read pages 10 and 11, clauses 22(a), (b) and (c) and section 23, and they will see that all authorities can be delegated to anyone under this act.

Though it's not a crown agency, OESO can make regulations and bylaws. It can charge and establish fees. Go to page 9, section 21, and you'll see that that authority is granted. It also specifically excludes the regulations of OESO as being regulations. They cannot come back before this House for scrutiny. Why is that, I'll ask the Attorney General? Why is that, I'll ask the Liberal benches?

Though it's not a crown agency, the minister shall ensure energy plans are online, shall refer an energy plan

to the board, may give directions etc. It's not a crown agency except for the fact that the minister controls it. Read page 11, sections 23 and 24, as well as section 25.30, and you'll see just what sort of monster you're creating with this act.

They've set up an organization, directed by the minister or from the Premier, and we don't have any oversight as elected officials or the people of this province. They have explicitly excluded the possibility for oversight. They've neutered the Legislature. The Premier and the ministers are, in effect, chameleons with this bill. OESO—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark, I think that's a bit of a stretch. You'll withdraw that comment.

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Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It sounded so nice and warm-blooded.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It didn't sound nice to me.

Mr. Randy Hillier: OESO can make bylaws that operate the same as regulations, except they're explicitly not regulations under this act. Go to sections 21 and 25, and we'll see. That's 25.30 through to 25.30(7). The act states that OESO is not subject to the Statutory Powers Procedure Act or to anyone related. Subsection 3(1) of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act says the act applies to "the exercise of a statutory power of decision conferred by or under an act of the Legislature...."

If we go to page 14, there it is, 25.6: "The Statutory Powers Procedure Act does not apply to a proceeding before the OESO, its board of directors or any committee, panel, person or body to which a power or duty has been delegated...." How's that for accountability?

I want to quote from the Ontario Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights: "The provisions of the [Statutory Powers Procedure] Act should apply to all tribunals, bodies or persons exercising judicial or administrative powers where fair procedure is required." The Liberals have disregarded that.

If OESO uses its power to make laws and fees, something it can do with this legislation, we have no oversight, and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act does not apply. If ratepayers have a problem at OESO, they can't appeal it. They don't even receive the basic rules enacted by the statute. If they have a problem, they do not receive the benefit of such basic principles as a notice of hearing, adjournments, counsel, examination of evidence, official notices. None of those are applicable to OESO. Also, OESO is not subject to freedom of information. Without the application of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act, there is no way for any of us to oversee or have recourse against this agency.

But, Speaker, it's even worse than that. The act states that OESO cannot be compelled to testify. It shall not be required to give testimony, and that you can find on page 8, subsection 15(2): "A member of a panel established

for the purpose of resolving or attempting to resolve a dispute ... shall not be required in any civil proceeding to give testimony...."

It goes on to further provide complete immunity for OESO from any civil action. "No ... proceeding shall be commenced against a director, officer, employee or agent of the OESO or a member of a committee or panel established by" it. That's under subsection 18(1). No action or civil proceedings shall be commenced against OESO. How's that for accountability and transparency and remedies?

This legislation requires far more explanation. OESO is a government organization. Let's call it what it is; it is a crown agency. We can't opt out of it. We can't compete with it. We need oversight. We need recourse. We need remedies. This is, in my view, nefarious. An agency is being set up by the government that is not a crown agency, yet it has all the same powers—an agency that is being set up without any oversight, remedy or recourse. The minister runs it, but we can't oversee it, and he can use it for camouflage.

The last time a minister was running our power system, the taxpayers got caught with billions of dollars in pointless spending. Power plants such as Oakville and Mississauga are the result. The last time we allowed any agency of the crown this little oversight, taxpayers were on the hook for \$1 billion for overpriced helicopters.

Speaker, this bill is setting up and creating another Chris Mazza with OESO now. You're looking to deliberately create another boondoggle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane—sorry, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you. I hear my riding is big, Mr. Speaker, but I didn't think that the federal boundary distribution was affecting us yet in the province. I know that it won't. But I know that the Timiskaming–Cochrane area is very well represented by my friend here.

Again, on the note the prior speaker just finished off on, it's common sense. If we look at the changes that are happening here, we're looking at withdrawing or removing some of the transparency. What I mean by transparency is the opportunity for the public to speak, suggest, provide information, question and actually participate in this process. That's key. That's what we have as a safeguard to make sure we get our views, our points, our suggestions, and what matters to us across, to make sure they're properly looked at, considered, taken into account, investigated. That's part of the process. By removing that process, Mr. Speaker, we're definitely going to find ourselves once again in some very difficult times.

It has been very difficult, I'll be frank with you, Mr. Speaker, as a newly elected MPP. It hasn't always been an enjoyable process, over the course of the last little while, seeing some of the discussions that have gone on in here. But we can prevent a recurrence of that by making this right.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Oh, that's no way to talk about your caucus members there.

Mr. Michael Mantha: You'll have an opportunity to speak in a second. I can cross over and we can have a chat after.

Anyway, we can prevent that stuff from happening by making sure we have the right mechanisms in place to prevent that from happening.

Again, it's still early in the day, and I think I'll have another two minutes later. I'll enjoy speaking to this motion a little bit later and hopefully make another point that needs to be made, which is making sure we don't fall into the same traps we've fallen into by taking away the accountability of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member from Algoma–Manitoulin and his observance of a slight error. Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Again, it's a pleasure to rise in this House and speak to Bill 75, the amalgamation of the two electricity agencies, the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority, and also in response to remarks by the honourable member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

We actually listened to the comments and were asked by the NDP to amalgamate the electricity system agencies, and that's what we are doing, actually. We are combining the two agencies, the OPA and the Independent Electricity System Operator.

Last year we asked Ontario agencies to come up with a plan to make some savings and efficiencies in their operation, and they actually came up with savings of \$1 billion, which is quite considerable. By the amalgamation of these two agencies, Ontario is going to save \$25 million. That is also a considerable amount of savings for taxpayers and ratepayers.

This new bill, if it passes in this House, is going to create one single agency which is going to be responsible for market operations in Ontario in relation to the electricity sector. It will also be responsible for creating opportunities to make efficiencies in contract management, and will streamline the electricity system agencies and operations in terms of administration in Ontario. Also it will create a system which will be more responsive to the changing situation in our electricity system.

Since we came to office, in the past nine years our electricity system has been changed. There has been enormous progress in that area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Mantha): Further questions and comments?

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Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to speak to this bill. I'd like to applaud my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for being able to root through this murky piece of legislation to find out and determine that it provides for a complete lack of accountability and oversight. This is a rather scary and ominous thing to think of when we have a government

that has done things before that have resulted in things like Ornge, which amounted to a huge scandal, a huge waste of money. We had eHealth, more huge waste of money, and we've had Presto. All these experiences were negative, were expensive and ended up with hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions, being wasted.

This bill is claiming to merge two organizations into one and give it a new name, but putting two old organizations together and giving them a new name doesn't create anything new; it's just an old organization under a new name, under the false pretense of trying to save some money—I wouldn't say it's a false pretense, but a suspect pretense. The \$25 million, in the big picture of what we are looking at here, with all those other scandals that we spoke about, the debt we that have in this province, is really minuscule. Never has anything been made bigger and created economies or savings; it always goes the other way, especially now that we see that written into this legislation is the elimination of accountability and oversight. We see already an organization that was temporary or transitional in nature, where they started out with 15 people and now they have 235 people. Salaries have ballooned and blossomed. Their budget has gone from \$14 million a year to \$76 million a year.

What we have here is a piece of legislation that is totally flawed and not going to achieve any benefit for the taxpayer, and I would say we have to strike this down and vote it down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Michael Mantha): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to talk a bit about the public and stakeholder participation piece as it relates to our everyday life in our constituency offices.

Since deregulation and the process of energy marketers, I don't know about any of you that are here today, but every week we have someone in the constituency office who has signed up inadvertently with an energy marketer who has been at the door of one of our constituents asking to see their current hydro bill or their current gas bill. I think that we need to do some work around that piece, because our constituents are being forced, in these energy contracts, to pay sometimes as much as five times what the per cubic metre rate is on the gas bills, and much higher electricity prices as well, when they are actually signing up with these various energy marketers. Just like we did with cellphone charges, I think we need to go back and deal with these energy marketers and make sure that the constituents in my riding and in the rest of your ridings are protected.

That happened as part of deregulation, which I don't agree, and my party has never agreed, was a good thing. So the piece about public stakeholder participation, consultation and communication is certainly a piece that's going to need to be added back into the bill to make sure that that communication piece and stakeholder piece is enveloped in the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? That's it?

We're going to go back to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for a two-minute response.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from Welland, Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Richmond Hill, and Algoma–Manitoulin for their participation in this debate.

It does disappoint me that nobody on the Liberal side responded to any of my questions or comments regarding this bill and the failings of it. I think they were too busy reading their menus from Pizza Nova instead of reading the bill. Had they had a copy of the bill here in the House, they could have actually looked at the relevant sections instead of the Pizza Nova menu.

I will say this: We have seen the failings of this government. We see it very clearly in my riding with the introduction of the proposed TransCanada gas plant. A 900-megawatt gas-fired plant is going to be built at the cost of \$1.5 billion or more, right beside an existing gas-fired 2,100-megawatt plant, owned by OPG, that sits doing nothing; it idles. It's used at less than 1% of its capacity. They could flip the switch, and give us 2,100 megawatts of power in this province—

Ms. Cindy Forster: But we don't need it.

Mr. Randy Hillier: But we don't need it. Instead of flipping that switch, they're going to build a \$1.5-billion gas-fired plant right beside the one that is essentially in mothballs. All they have to do is flip a switch, but we can tell the lights are not on. There are some people home over there, but the lights are not on—not at all.

This energy policy is just going to be creating more and more breaches of privilege with this bill.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I rise to speak to Bill 75, an act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, and amalgamate the Independent Electricity System Operator and the Ontario Power Authority.

For years, our caucus has been warning about the cost of hydro spiralling out of control. For years, the Liberal government has made energy policy without any regard to the impact on the people who pay the bills: families, seniors and businesses. As we've seen recently, many of their decisions had much more to do with politics than with the cost of hydro or regard for the people of Ontario. Finally, they seem to have acknowledged that there's a problem, but unfortunately, they put forward a bill which won't produce any real savings.

We believe the Ontario Power Authority should not be merged, but simply scrapped altogether. It was formed seven years ago as a 15-person transitional body created by the McGuinty government to manage Ontario's energy supply. Today it's a 235-person permanent entity where 87 people earn over \$100,000 and the CEO, as has been mentioned here before, earns \$570,000.

You can give them whatever job title you want and change the name of the organization on their business card, but you'll still have trouble explaining to the seniors who pay their hydro bills why we need all these

people. In just seven years, the Ontario Power Authority has burned through \$375 million in expenditures and its expenses have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to \$76.4 million today. Shuffling bureaucrats down the hall and creating one super-agency shows that the government still doesn't recognize the severity of Ontario's debt crisis. The government has claimed that it will save money but has yet to show us how it plans to do that.

The PC caucus believes that we need to address waste. That's why we put forward a proposal to review all government agencies: to fix those that are broken and get rid of those, like the OPA, that are unnecessary. Mr. Speaker, that would actually produce savings. We believe that energy policy must be considered as an economic policy. The government needs to consider the cost and impact of their policy decisions before they charge ahead.

As I mentioned earlier, the OPA was set up to manage the energy supply. Let's look and see how that's working. A few weeks ago, there was an article in the Toronto Star that announced that Ontario is ending the practice of paying other jurisdictions to take Ontario's excess power. If that was an option all along, why have we been paying out \$10 million a year to get other people to take our power? Ten million dollars a year—that's an average of \$200,000 a week that we have just been giving away so that they would take our power. That means that since the ministry introduced this bill that is supposed to reduce the cost of hydro, we have spent approximately \$4,383,562 to unnecessarily have someone take our excess power. That doesn't sound like reducing costs to me.

If you don't need to pay the people in other jurisdictions to take the power, why did the article say that we are still paying large power consumers within Ontario to take the hydro when there's an excess?

Let's put that in perspective. The large consumers of power are likely to be manufacturers who have production lines. It seems unlikely that they are going to be able to call in hundreds more workers on short notice and increase their consumption of power just because the wind started blowing and resulted in excess power in the grid.

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The article went on to say, "The IESO has also decided to block payments to energy traders who offer to import power over wires that are already at capacity. The traders then collect fees, even though no additional power can be delivered." This, Mr. Speaker, is managing our electricity system. Why have the people of Ontario been paying fees to traders who aren't supplying any power? If the government was serious about reducing hydro costs, why haven't they already addressed that? It seems a lot like the deal the government made with TransCanada where they promised to pay them \$280 million a year even if they don't produce any power.

Clearly, this government has no real plan for the energy sector. It insisted that power plants had to be located near residences in Oakville and Mississauga in spite of objections from the community, only to move the

plants at the last minute in an attempt to save seats during the recent election. In fact, the Mississauga announcement came halfway through the campaign, and the people of Ontario watched for days and weeks as the building continued, despite the fact that the government had finally acknowledged it wasn't the right place for the plant—each day watching as more and more of their money was spent on a plant that wasn't going to be built. The cost we know about so far for the political decision to move the two plants is \$640 million, more than 25 times what the minister claims this bill would save. It makes it hard to believe the Liberals when they say they're trying to save money on hydro. And those are only the costs we know about today.

The documents that the Liberals released included many sections that were blanked out and many missing pages. So the people of Ontario still don't know how much it will cost them for the Liberals to save those few seats.

I think part of what is so disturbing about this mess is the lack of regard for the people of Ontario, that the Liberals still don't believe taxpayers deserve all the information, and they're only prepared to hand over edited documents. They didn't listen to the people when they raised their concerns about the location and safety of the plants. They charged ahead making commitments that taxpayers are now paying for. They only changed their mind on the locations when there were Liberal seats at risk. Mr. Speaker, they're still trying to hide information about the decision and its impact. I hope that the McGuinty government will do the right thing and release the rest of the documents, this time with no deleted pages and blanked out sections. The people of Ontario deserve the full truth, and they deserve a government that will consider the impact of decisions on hydro users rather than election results.

Mr. Speaker, there's one thing in this bill that I was pleased to see. It addresses how the Minister of Energy is to go about submitting an energy plan for the province's long-term energy needs—finally, an acknowledgement by the Liberal government that they have no plan.

They made the lack of a plan clear in their disastrous green energy experiments. They claimed that the FIT program would create long-term stability for green energy, but the McGuinty government introduced the program at such an unsustainably high rate that it wasn't long before they had to lower their own rate. Clearly, the government didn't have a plan.

Then they discovered that they had approved solar panel applications in areas where there was no capacity in the grid. People have gone to the expense of applying and installing a solar panel only to find that they can't hook into the grid and get a return on their investment. Clearly, the government has no plan.

In fact, last year, I asked the Minister of Energy, through an order paper question, to provide the number of participants in Oxford who have received a conditional acceptance from the OPA but are unable to connect to the grid due to insufficient capacity. I received a long answer

of all the good things they claim they've done, but he couldn't provide the number of people waiting to connect to the grid. I also asked him to provide the number of farmers who have conditional acceptances and are unable to connect to the grid due to insufficient capacity. Not only could the minister not provide the number, I received the exact same letter as to the other question.

We know from the government's own document, the 2010 fall economic statement, that the cost of hydro is forecast to increase by 46%. The document clearly states that the majority of those costs are due to the Green Energy Act. We don't know how much more it will increase as a result of decisions relocating the Mississauga and Oakville plants.

Mr. Speaker, we've all heard from people in our ridings about the impact of spiralling hydro costs. I've heard from seniors who are worried about the increases continuing—that they won't be able to stay in their homes—and from families who are having to sacrifice other expenses because of their hydro bills.

I've also heard from business about the fact that the cost of doing business in Ontario just continues to increase. In my last survey, 95% of businesses responded and said they have been impacted by increased hydro costs, and 60% indicated that it was a significant impact. The increasing cost of doing business is forcing companies and jobs out of Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

While it is a positive step that the McGuinty government is finally starting to acknowledge the fact that their policies are driving up the cost of hydro, this bill is more about public relations and window dressing. It doesn't address the cost of smart meters, the cost of green energy or the cost of mismanagement such as paying people to take our power.

The minister should withdraw this bill and introduce one that actually impacts and reduces the cost of hydro in the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, I'm speaking on the Ontario electrical systems act and responding to the member for Oxford. There are some things that we do agree on and some we don't.

I'm not sure the government doesn't have a plan. I think we will agree that they're very bad plans. I think that's one thing that the right and the left can agree on.

One of the things that they forgot in their planning is that if you drive the price of electricity high enough, you will lose jobs. I heard a member on the other side that he would debate anyone that that's not the case. I've got one word for him, and that's Xstrata. Xstrata in Timmins closed because our hydro was twice what it was in Quebec. It gave the government a chance to try and put an industrial hydro rate in. But no, it didn't; it moved. Hydro producers, electrical producers, in my region, because Xstrata was such a big user, have overcapacity, and they're wondering if they're going to get a contract.

To the Minister of Transportation, who says that we make money selling—I know people in IESO, and the

regulation is very, very complicated. Those people deserve to make a lot of money because they do a really complicated job. I've got no problem with that.

Mr. John O'Toole: With \$600,000?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm not saying the guys at the top, but the guys who actually do the work do a crucial job. But when we shut plants down and when we let water go over the dams, no one's going to tell me that we're making big money exporting hydro. You have to tell the whole story—both sides.

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

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise in response to the comments made by the honourable member from Oxford and also the honourable member from the third party.

Mr. Speaker, there has been some discussion in this House with regard to excess power. The thing is that you can't store electricity; when electricity is produced, it has to be consumed.

Our province of Ontario used to be a net exporter of electricity before 1990. During the NDP rule for five years and the Conservative rule for eight years, in those 13 years, the production capacity of electricity in the province of Ontario came down by 6%. As a result, we became a net importer of electricity from the United States and from neighbouring provinces in our own country, Canada. For example, in one year during Conservative rule, we imported over \$1 billion in electricity from the United States.

What happens, Mr. Speaker, is that when we need electricity, we import electricity from our neighbours, and when they need our electricity, we export our electricity to them. As a result, we become either a net exporter of electricity or a net importer of electricity.

I'm glad to report to this House that the province of Ontario is now a net exporter of electricity. We have enough power in this province to feed our industry, to warm our houses in northern Ontario and in southern Ontario and to cool our houses and buildings in southern Ontario during hot summer days. We've never had a single minute of power outage, blackout or brownout in the past few years. We have created, Mr. Speaker, 10,000 new megawatts of capacity in our system. This is a major achievement of this province in the past nine years in the electricity sector. I am so proud to be a member of this government: that our electricity system is in a good, perfect state and we are making good progress.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I have to respect the member from Oxford. I would say he summarized, in the general sense, the complete lack of any plan—which I think we are all concurring with, including the member that just spoke. The Green Energy Act: What a dismal mix of social policy with economic policy.

The third thing is the yet-unresolved “smart meter”—un-smart meter. It's really time-of-use, where they double the cost of electricity at peak times. That's

basically what they did, and they called it a smart meter. A smart meter is when you can phone my cottage and turn on the heaters. That's a smart meter. You do it through your circuit.

I want to say this, though: I think he covered—the last minister is wrong. They said today in question period that they've stopped coal. What they did—coal is peaking power. The baseload is nuclear, the peaking power is coal and there are five gas plants in Ontario that are fully manned and that are never used. Five plants; gas plants today that aren't used. Why aren't they used? The biggest user of energy is the economy; 70% of all electrons are consumed by refining fuels, the forestry industry, melting steel, manufacturing. That's 70% of all—but there's no economy. There are 600,000 families without income. Why? Because our pricing of electricity, the electricity plan is all wrong. We're not a net exporter of power, as you described it. We are net exporters of power we can't use. It's called green energy. When it's dispatched, we must buy it. When we buy it, we have to take power off the system, so we give it to Quebec. We could never afford—Quebec would never buy our power. Their power is half our price. And Manitoba—Winnipeg is hydroelectric power. It's cheaper than ours. You should read the file. It's not a social policy, it's an economic policy, and you've screwed it up.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to address an issue that actually hasn't really come up in this conversation—although, for the love of humanity, what else can you say about this? I mean, I know it's early days for me to be saying stuff like that.

The first reading, actually—the energy critic, Peter Tabuns, explained to the House that in the past, to assess the power plans for Ontario, one needed an environmental assessment, something that 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 such a project, to speak to the individuals affected, to consult with the experts, to do the background research. Presenting the facts to the decision-makers would actually be highly beneficial; it would actually serve the general public at large, not to mention that it would give 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, we, the NDP, believe that such consultation should absolutely be required, and the public is paying attention to the power portfolio, to the energy portfolio. They're paying attention for the wrong reasons, in many respects, because there is a confidence issue, I think, on this portfolio. But the public is interested in the power issue, so let's engage the public in a conversation.

This bill diminishes the extent to which we assess power planning in Ontario, and that actually should be a concern for all of us. Yet again, it gives the minister more power to determine the parameters of the questions for the OEB. Again, that is of great concern to us. We know

from many clear examples this year, and just recently, what happens when you give the ministers more power and shut out the public. The public want to be part of this conversation. They are concerned about the cost of power. Let's open the doors and have them be part of the conversation as well.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Richmond Hill, Durham and Kitchener–Waterloo for their comments.

Going back to my presentation, the number one issue was the fact that the government doesn't seem to have any plan for what they're doing in the energy field. The explanations that we keep hearing from the government side when they take a few minutes to speak is that they have stopped the brownouts, supposedly, that were there by building this capacity. If this was the plan, they would have noticed that the original plan was to build this plant in Oakville where maybe the power was needed, maybe that's where there's still enough industry to consume the power. But when you move it from there and build it beside a plant that was mentioned by one of my colleagues from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington—they're building it right beside a gas plant that hasn't been running all this time, which you said you didn't need. So why would you need another plant beside that one? That just doesn't make sense. What I think is, if you had a plan, you've put it in the drawer some place, and you're not looking at it because it just doesn't work.

The other thing, of course, is that when you move the plant there, in order to get the power back to where you originally, supposedly, planned to put the plant, you have to build transmission lines. Recognizing that the plant that's sitting there now doesn't have enough transmission lines to get its power to Toronto or it could have got it here, now you have to build the lines for a plant that's already there producing, and you're spending \$1.5 billion or whatever it is to build a plant that will never be needed there. It's needed elsewhere.

Now, if you're suggesting that you're going to move all the users—and maybe that's your intent—that you have in Toronto and see if we can get them to locate in eastern Ontario where we have an abundance of electricity now, I don't think that's the answer. I think you're going to need some power in Toronto, and you haven't designed anything to do that.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I stand in my place today to speak to 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 make complementary amendments to other Acts.

The Minister of Energy has put this bill forward on behalf of a government that's up to its neck in scandals. The latest scandal involves millions wasted on bad decisions in the Ministry of Energy. So, Mr. Speaker,

you'll forgive me if I am extremely circumspect of this government's recommendations on how to fix any aspect of how government works, most particularly when it comes to energy.

On its surface, the purpose of Bill 75 is to reduce the cost of operating two organizations by merging them. The Ontario Power Authority, or OPA, and the Independent Electricity System Operator, or IESO, are planned to be amalgamated. This move is supposed to save \$25 million. It seems questionable whether this attempt to reduce costs is worthwhile at all. This merger does not reduce the number of employees or create significant savings anywhere. Who knows if we will end up saving any money? This government's budget forecasting leaves a lot to be desired.

When the OPA was started seven years ago, it had 15 employees. Today, the OPA employs 235 people, 87 of whom earn over \$100,000, and the CEO takes home \$570,000. In seven years, the OPA has spent \$375 million with little to show for it. Expenses for this government agency have risen from \$14 million in 2005 to over \$76 million today.

Originally, the government set up the OPA as a transitional body. If Bill 75 passes, this temporary measure will continue to haunt us for years to come. Instead of giving it new life with this proposed merger, the Ontario Power Authority should be scrapped. It does not give us value for money. It does not save us money, but only tries to find new ways of spending millions of new money from electricity ratepayers. The rates keep going up and up and up.

Ontario's electricity production plan is a financial failure. The Green Energy Act's incentives for wind and solar power producers are outrageously expensive. The government pays up to 10 times the going rate for electricity to these producers. How could the government ever propose such an irresponsible plan? It's totally unsustainable; we knew that from the start. Some estimates put the cost of this program at \$80 billion over 20 years. What an irresponsible way to mortgage the future of Ontarians.

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The windmills popping up all over rural Ontario are unsightly, unwanted, inefficient and unaffordable. Communities are forced to accept wind towers and solar panels that are an eyesore and are not wanted by local residents. Good farmland is lost to solar farms. There are even questions about the health implications of placing wind towers too close to homes.

Ontario pays high subsidized prices, up to 80 cents per kilowatt hour, which are unaffordable. The global adjustment charge on industrial hydro bills is to cover the increase in electricity costs resulting from the high cost of solar and wind power. This global adjustment charge is driving up the cost of electricity to the highest level in any state or province in North America. Businesses are leaving Ontario because of the high cost in electricity. People are losing their jobs. New businesses are choosing not to set up business in Ontario because of high electricity costs.

We need to cancel the Green Energy Act. That will save us tens of billions of dollars over the next 20 years. Why doesn't the government's energy plan include buying electricity from Quebec? Hydroelectric power from James Bay is cheap, it's Canadian, it's affordable and it's green.

Why did the government plan to build electricity plants in Mississauga and Oakville? We didn't need them. We have a surplus of electricity that we sell to New York and Quebec at a loss every year. And now we are committed to building the plants at Lennox power station and in Lambton. What a waste of money.

If you talk to people in the energy industry, they agree that the urgent problem is not generation of electricity. We have a surplus. The problem is transmitting the electricity across our province. Right now, we have more than enough north-south lines; we need new transmission lines to go east and west. We need lines to carry our electricity to the people who need it in the corners of our province. This is a problem that festers under this government.

Now taxpayers are stuck with the cost of cancelling the Mississauga and Oakville electricity plants. The cost of this mistake is \$650 million and growing. For what? For nothing. What a waste—a waste of taxpayer money. Billions and billions slip away through the government's fingers like water over Niagara Falls. But the word "waste" is all too familiar when we think of this government. Think Ornge, \$700 million; think Presto, \$500 million and growing; think eHealth, \$2 billion and nothing to show for it. What a waste.

Mr. Speaker, this government has demonstrated a consistent inability to manage taxpayer money in a responsible and accountable manner. The blatant and massive waste of billions of taxpayer dollars has to stop. We are broke. We are heading for a \$400-billion debt, and the government is unable to control the deficit.

As a comparison, the state of California is \$390 billion in debt. They have 33 million people. That works out to around \$12,000 per person. To attack their debt, the state government reduced funding to colleges and universities by 20% to save half a billion per year. San Diego shut down eight of 48 fire engines for two years. They shut down libraries and community centres to half time, staying open for 20 hours a week. California is reducing public pension plans. The list goes on. They're implementing many more spending reductions. They are doing something.

What are we doing here in Ontario? Nothing. We keep spending like everything is okay. Our Ontario debt is \$20,000 per person and growing. Everything is not okay. We are following the road to Greece. We are spending too much money, and it has to stop.

It will take a long time, it will be painful, but all Ontarians will have to shoulder the burden of this debt. Such is the price of bad government, such is the cost of this government's irresponsible decision-making on our behalf.

This bill does not change that. It does not turn over a new leaf. It's more of the same. Mr. Speaker, this bill

will not solve our problem of big spending. It takes two organizations and puts them into one office and gives them a new name. An old product with a new name is not change. This bill will not reduce spending. We must vote no to this bill because it is ineffective, like this Liberal government.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank you for providing me the opportunity to sit where you sit in that wonderful chair of yours. In the brief moment I was there, trying to match the skills that you've demonstrated to this House by the respect that you've shown in this House, the order that you've kept this House in and actually the focus that you've kept us in, it has given me a different perspective in regard to the role you play here as Speaker, and really I commend you for keeping us focused and keeping us moving forward in this House. I want to thank you very much. If ever the opportunity presents itself, I would only hope that I can do as good a job as you do.

Now, back to this particular piece of legislation: In my prior role or in my many roles and my many hats that I've worn through my lifetime and my career as a labour representative, when we sat down and had many discussions with management across the table, one of the first things that we talked about when we were at labour-management meetings was costs and the biggest costs, myself coming from the forestry sector, dealt with energy.

Again, I've heard from other members that we need to get in line with what exactly happened from the 2007 era in the forest industry—not only to the forest industry but also in the mining sector where we've lost so many jobs in Ontario, and that is because of very poor energy policy going forward.

Yes, we're in favour of consolidation. Yes, we are in favour of moving forward with this. But no, we are not in favour of eliminating the scrutinizing that the public will have with this particular piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Before we move on, I'd like to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his kind words.

Comments, questions?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my pleasure to join the member from Algoma-Manitoulin in thanking you for the excellent job you have been doing, Mr. Speaker. We all commend you for the excellent job you do in that chair.

There has been some discussion in this House, as we were debating Bill 75, about the cost of electricity in the province of Ontario. The reality is that our price, the price of electricity in Ontario, is very comparable with the price of electricity among our neighbouring jurisdictions, which is about five cents per kilowatt hour during off-peak times. When you compare this price with the price of electricity in western Europe, for example—just as an example, I give Germany, which is the industrial heartland of Europe. The price of electricity in Germany is 27 cents; in France, it's much higher than

ours—in Belgium, Holland and the UK and so on and so forth. So the price of electricity in our province of Ontario is reasonable and it is within the range with electricity prices in our neighbouring jurisdictions.

Apart from that, our government has given some benefits to the consumers of electricity in the province of Ontario. For example, we have the Ontario clean energy benefit which takes 10% off the bill of every consumer in the province of Ontario, and we have the Ontario energy and property tax credit. For seniors, it's about \$1,078 per year; for individuals and families it's \$946 per year. There is the northern Ontario energy credit, which is \$210 per family and \$137 for each individual. Those are the benefits for individuals and families.

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There are also benefits for industrial users as well, Mr. Speaker, particularly in northern Ontario. We have the northern industrial electricity program, which takes 25% off of the electricity bill for industries—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks to the member from Richmond Hill—also for his kind words.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to start by saying—and I thank the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills for his in-depth speech. But there's a paragraph on this paper I have. It says, "This legislation also addresses how the minister is to go about submitting an energy plan for the province's long-term energy needs, which must receive cabinet approval. However, it does not set out any time frames as to how often or when the minister is required to do this."

It says it "fails to correct a serious problem, which is the continued opportunity for undue political influence to outweigh factual evidence when it comes to decisions regarding Ontario's future energy plans. Many experts and observers of the industry believe the minister already has too much power."

Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario are frightened of our energy situation right now. They're frightened because of the cost. They don't know where this government is going, because as far as I know they've never had an energy plan that works. The green energy plan was implemented a number of years ago, and we've seen what that does: It drives up the costs of hydro, of energy; it separates communities. We have communities where neighbours aren't talking to their neighbours now. It's causing a lot of problems in rural Ontario. However, that doesn't seem to bother this government much. They would just as soon listen to the people of the cities; if they don't want an energy project in their backyard, rural Ontario doesn't matter.

I agree with my colleague over here with his thoughts. People in Ontario are frightened, and we need to get our energy policy under control for this province to be great again.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, speaking on the Ontario electrical systems act, another two minutes, and I

think one thing the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills and everyone on this side of the House—people are worried about their energy costs. If they're watching us today, I think they sometimes don't really know what we're talking about; sometimes some of us don't even know what we're talking about. But at the end of the day, they're really worried about their energy costs. Does this bill relate to their energy costs? Yes, it does. If you put the outfit that buys the power and mould it together with the outfit that actually regulates the power, it should have a difference on their energy costs. It should reduce them—not by much; not by nearly enough. That part of the bill we can maybe swallow, maybe—that part of the bill. But the other part of the bill, the bill that no one on that side talks about, is when you mould the two together, you're also taking out the part where the OPA has to give an energy plan to the OEB, which the public—remember them, the people who pay the hydro bills?—can challenge, and you replace that with a ministerial plan. What we've gone through since the last little while—we all know what happens with ministerial plans, and when those of us in election campaigns get too involved in power, we all know what happens then.

Hon. John Gerretsen: What happens?

Mr. John Vanthof: People end up paying big bills for power that's never created, because politicians take energy plants and they move them around like Monopoly pieces on a board, on the provincial board, and it costs people who pay the bills—who can't pay the bills—it costs them way too much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills has two minutes.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to thank my colleagues from Algoma–Manitoulin, Richmond Hill, Perth–Wellington and Timiskaming–Cochrane for their comments.

Pretty clearly, we've heard many people speak, and we're hearing again and again that this bill is very flawed. It's going to merge two hydro organizations, with the idea that there would be efficiencies, economies and savings of \$25 million—and nobody believes that.

We're dealing with a government that has a terrible track record from the point of view of accountability and oversight, and a terrible record when it comes to managing money. We have organizations like Ornge, where corruption has happened and money was wasted; eHealth, Presto etc.

Now here we have a bill where, purposely and pointedly, oversight and accountability have been removed. So we think of the history of this government and how they've managed our money and the public purse in the past, and they've been a terrible failure, in the order of billions of dollars. If there's one thing they're good at, it's big numbers and big wastes of big money.

We see an organization that was supposed to be transitional. It started out with a \$14-million budget; it has blossomed to \$76 million. They've grown from 15

employees to 235, and the money's getting spent like water.

Clearly, this bill is not going to do any good for the Ontario taxpayer. It's a dangerous piece of legislation because of the complete lack of accountability and oversight, and a government that has a propensity for wasting our tax dollars. We have to vote this bill down.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a chance to speak to Bill 75, the Ontario Electricity System Operator Act, 2012.

The government has told us that this act will merge the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator. They also tell us that it will save Ontario taxpayers \$25 million per year, a savings that I would be happy to see, but I really think it's more like a drop on the sand against the surge of this government's energy price increases.

The PC caucus has identified a number of problems with the bill. Firstly, it reduces transparency and consolidates power in the hands of the Minister of Energy. Secondly, its cost savings are, as I have stated, only a droplet, and do not match what is necessary.

Bill 75 would strip away the board's ability to render meaningful input into many areas of the energy system, including long-term planning. Again, the board would be left with no real teeth or mechanism available to force any changes. This legislation would take away the board's oversight of fees charged by the IESO. It alters the role of the board and moves it away from consumer protection and, instead, towards an advocacy role for the policies of the government, putting emphasis on renewables and conservation.

So why are transparency and cost savings important? Because affordable energy is vital to Ontario's economic growth and prosperity. Reliable and affordable energy has played a crucial role in making Ontario the industrial heartland of Canada. It powered our once-unrivaled manufacturing sector that employed generations of Ontarians with good, dependable and lasting jobs.

Energy policy is a cornerstone of economic growth, but this has not been the approach that the current government has taken. Previous speakers have referred to various types of demonstration of the kind of industrial growth that has flourished in this province, and you can see obviously how the opposite is true.

In December, Auditor General Jim McCarter released a scathing indictment of the government's Green Energy Act, and I suggest that Green Energy Act was the poster for the government in terms of the way in which it wanted to manage the energy sector.

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The auditor tells us "that for each job created through renewable energy programs, about two to four jobs are often lost in other sectors of the economy because of higher electricity prices." The recent Drummond commission report also flagged the clear link between high electricity prices and lethargic growth in Ontario.

When you consider that energy and electricity are usually the key drivers to manufacturing and industrial activity, it only stands to reason that when a government makes deals that raise the cost of energy, this is going to have that obvious outcome. Our business hydro rates are amongst the highest in North America and obviously killing jobs and preventing growth.

If the government thinks that they are making a major contribution to affordable energy by merging the Ontario Power Authority and the Independent Electricity System Operator, they're wrong. The problem with our energy system is not these two agencies; it is the policies of this government.

Let me give you an example from my own riding: the natural-gas-fired peaker plant beside the Holland Marsh. In 2005, the Ontario Power Authority identified that there was an inadequate supply of electricity to meet the growing demand in northern York region. The government accepted this conclusion, as did I. The first plan to meet this from the OPA was to build an enhanced power line through York region. The government wouldn't back this, so the plan was scrapped. Then the OPA decided to build the peaker plant, studying and consulting on various sites in northern York region and southern Simcoe county. They eventually chose one beside the Holland Marsh, and the plant has now been built and is operational.

During this process, I asked for a full environmental assessment on the plant, which the Minister of the Environment refused to do. In 2010, the Environmental Commissioner revealed that local citizens had made multiple requests to bump up the peaker plant to a full environmental assessment. He said that the requesters made compelling arguments. The province denied their requests and the commissioner said that if a request was not granted in this case, it is difficult to imagine a situation when such a request would in fact be approved. In fact, the commissioner could not find any bump-up request that this government has granted.

Then the government decided to exempt the plant from the Planning Act to shove it through faster, and then they cancelled the plants in Oakville and Mississauga for blatantly political reasons.

All of this goes to show how poorly this government manages the energy file and why transparency is necessary.

Now they would have us believe that merging two energy agencies will make some kind of difference in how they manage our power system. I am confident that however they reorganize our electricity system, it will not meet the needs of Ontarians in a transparent and accountable manner. Exempting the peaker plant from the Planning Act is just the same as the government—when it looked at the Green Energy Act and took away local control over industrial wind and solar farms.

You lose accountability when decisions are removed from elected mayors and councils and moved to the Ministry of Energy at Queen's Park, and you drive costs through the roof, particularly with the green-energy boondoggle.

The Green Energy Act's feed-in tariff program pays out massive subsidies for wind and solar contracts to produce power we often cannot use when it is produced. This continues to drive up the cost of electricity. Costs rose 26% between 2008 and 2010, and bills are now projected to rise 46% by 2014. And because you can't store the wind and solar electricity, the taxpayers end up paying the United States and Quebec to take that even greater amount of surplus power off our hands. We've paid them \$1.8 billion over the last six years, \$420 million in the first 10 months of 2011 alone.

Then we have to add in the cost of cancelling the Oakville power plant and the cancellation, demolition and relocation of the Mississauga power plant. These cancellations were nothing more than political seat-savers and may cost the taxpayers or the ratepayers \$1 billion—maybe even \$1 billion apiece according to some estimates.

I said earlier that in my riding there was an important power need identified, and that it was the government that mismanaged the need. So it seems to me that when you look at all of this, what we have at the end of the day is a huge cost and lack of oversight, transparency and accountability. So on no basis can you find legitimate, good policy coming from the Ministry of Energy on the electricity file. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I adjourn the House for the day, I'd like to thank the two fashion czars over there for their comment on my socks. Thanks very much.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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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	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Bob Delaney

Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Teresa Piruzza

Bob Delaney, Victor Fedeli

Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton

Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza

Michael Prue, Peter Shurman

Soo Wong

Clerks / Greffiers: Valerie Quioc Lim, Katch Koch (pro. tem)

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