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Monday 5 October 2015

Lundi 5 octobre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 5 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 5 octobre 2015

The House met at 1030.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to welcome Lyndsay Macdonald, Bethany Grady, Matthew Taylor, Jessica Kerridge, Heather Burt, Rashin Lamouchi and Denisa Argyo. They are here as child care advocates.

I'd also like to welcome Paul Elliott, the president of OSSTF, and I'd like to wish his members and all teachers a happy World Teachers' Day today.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to welcome Matteo Guinci. He is my staff in the constit office in the great riding of Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to introduce Ben Williamson from the Premier's youth council. Ben is also a resident of Newmarket–Aurora.

I'd also like to welcome the Aurora Montessori School class to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the member for Scarborough Southwest and page Krishaj Rajbhandari, I'm pleased to welcome his mother, Jasmine Rajbhandari, and his sister Isha Rajbhandari. They're in the public gallery this morning.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to welcome page captain Grace Maili Sengfah; her mother, Ja Kai Shwe; her father, Sai Shwe; and family friends Cathleen Mungal and Janelle Mungal. They will be here in the members' gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not sure whether they're here—oh, they're just coming in now. It's my pleasure to introduce to the House a remarkable and inspirational group of young people, the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities. Thank you very much for being here. The group was established in 2012 and provides advice directly to me. I'm very happy to have had a chance to meet with them this morning, and I know they're going to be having great deliberations all day.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm pleased to welcome to the Legislature, from my riding of Etobicoke Centre, a delegation from the Consulting Engineers of Ontario. They are led by their chair, Mr. Bruce Potter, of B.M. Ross and Associates, and their CEO, Mr. Barry Steinberg. The Consulting Engineers are here today for their inaugural Queen's Park day to meet with all of us as part of their

40th anniversary. I would invite everyone to join us at the reception in the legislative dining room this afternoon.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome the delegation from Fanshawe College that is here today having a reception after question period. President Peter Devlin is here, and somewhere in this building is a former MPP for Middlesex, Bruce Smith.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Further to the Fanshawe introduction, we're delighted to have them here today. They're hosting a luncheon reception, and I invite all members to join us from 11:30 to 1:30 in room 228 to showcase Fanshawe College's excellent programs, including a gourmet lunch prepared by Fanshawe's culinary students.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce Leah Hollins, who is chair of Canadian Blood Services. I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage all members of this House to visit blood.ca to see how you and your constituents have the power to give life.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I've noticed a very good friend of ours, Pierre Cyr, is also in the audience. He now works with Canadian Blood Services and is a proud resident of the great city of Ottawa. Welcome, Pierre.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: On behalf of the member for Eglinton–Lawrence and page Anna Farley, I'd like to recognize the page's mother, Manjusha Pawagi; her father, Simon Farley; and her grandmother Asha Pawagi.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have a number of friends in the gallery. There are many members of the Citizens' Climate Lobby here. This has been one of the most powerful groups for advocacy on climate change. I'd like to welcome them today.

I also would like to welcome the many engineers from Professional Engineers Ontario and the Consulting Engineers of Ontario. My dear friend Barry Steinberg, who is also a great environmentalist as well as an engineer, is here today.

Mme France Gélinas: I have a visitor from Sudbury. Her name is Cathy Orlando. She is with Sharon Howarth and Marilyn Eriksen from the Citizens' Climate Lobby. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Seeing none, it's time for—a point of order from the member from Oshawa.

FATAL TRAFFIC ACCIDENT

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe we have unanimous consent for a moment of silence to recognize the three people tragic-

ally killed and the 16 others badly injured in the tractor-trailer accident Friday night in Durham region.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oshawa is seeking unanimous consent for a moment's silence for the traffic accident that took place. Do we agree? Agreed.

I would ask all members, and visitors as well, to stand, if possible, and observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The top three highest-paid energy executives in British Columbia are the managing director of Powerex, the president and CEO of Powerex, and the president and CEO of BC Hydro. Combined, those three executives are paid just under \$2 million a year in compensation. But here in Ontario, the Premier agreed to pay the new Hydro CEO over \$4 million.

Mr. Speaker, can the Premier explain why BC is able to pay their top three hydro executives less than half of what Ontario is paying their new Hydro CEO?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy is going to want to speak to the details of the company, Hydro One, right now. What I want to do is just make it clear that our intention in broadening the ownership of Hydro One is to leverage a current asset and allow us, as a government, to invest in the infrastructure and the new assets that are needed for the 21st century. Now, I know that the Leader of the Opposition is not supportive of that, but the fact is if we do not make those investments, if we don't invest in roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and transit infrastructure, we're not going to be competitive. We're not going to be able to compete with other jurisdictions in the world, and we're not going to be as productive as we need to be. People and goods are not going to be able to move in the way that they need to.

We are making those investments for the future productivity of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: The question is again for the Premier, and it is on Hydro One executive compensation. In BC, hydro bills are half of what they are in Ontario. BC's Liberal government isn't forcing seniors to choose between heating and eating. Hydro One's new multi-million-dollar executive salaries will have to be paid through higher and higher hydro bills. Citizens on fixed incomes cannot afford to pay higher and higher hydro bills, but that is what is going to happen.

Why is the Premier making life more and more difficult for people in Ontario just so that she can hand out lavish executive compensation for Hydro One?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I heard someone heckling that I hadn't understood the first question. I actually had understood the first question perfectly, because it is impossible to talk about Hydro One and what we are doing in the broadening of the ownership without talking about investments in infrastructure. That's what it's about. The reason we are doing this, and we are doing it in a—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You see, Mr. Speaker, we're committed to building infrastructure. The party opposite had no plan to build infrastructure—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When they were in office, they didn't build infrastructure; they filled in holes that had already been dug for transit. They didn't invest. We have been investing and we are going to continue to do that.

The Leader of the Opposition knows that Hydro One will be regulated by the Ontario Business Corporations Act, the Ontario Securities Act and the Ontario Energy Board. He knows that executives will have to file information with the Ontario Securities Commission, and that information will be disclosed.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Premier: Hydro One executive pay is out of line with the rest of Canada. The CEO of BC Hydro is paid \$495,000. The annual compensation for the president of SaskPower is \$482,000. Last year, the head of Manitoba Hydro was paid just shy of \$500,000. The new CEO of Hydro-Québec will be paid \$480,000. The combined salaries of the six hydro executives in four provinces is still less than the \$4 million being paid to the new Hydro One CEO. Not surprisingly, ratepayers in those four provinces are paying less than they are in Ontario.

The Premier could have issued a directive to the Hydro One board setting limits on executive compensation, but she chose not to. Mr. Speaker, why didn't the Premier set limits on Hydro One salaries when so many people in Ontario are struggling with their hydro bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When we look at comparable Toronto Stock Exchange companies, the pay will actually be set at the medium-to-low range. The base salary for the new CEO is \$850,000, with some incentives.

The Premier is right: The issue is infrastructure. By broadening ownership, we are able to access billions of dollars without coming from taxes, without reducing services and without raising debt.

That government doesn't know anything about infrastructure, either in the general economy or in energy.

Their average investment in infrastructure when they were in government was \$2 billion a year. They under-invested in the energy sector, so we went into deficit. We were importing a billion dollars a year. We lost transmission service, we lost distribution service and we had to invest \$34 billion to make up for their—

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

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. People in Ontario are tired of watching the Premier spin and evade question after question on the Sudbury by-election corruption scandal. They've been writing to me, calling my office and posting online, asking when will the Premier answer a direct question.

On tape, Gerry Lougheed Jr. told Andrew Olivier that Pat Sorbara and the Premier would talk to him about job options available to him in exchange for stepping aside. People deserve to know if the Premier instructed Gerry Lougheed Jr. to say what he said. Yes or no, will the Premier testify at the corruption trial to deal with allegations that everyone in Ontario is talking about?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have a lot of faith in the process that is in place. I have faith in the authorities. We have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Regrettably, it looks like I'm going to have to get—I'll let you finish the sentence.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've worked with the authorities, and I will continue to work with the authorities. The Leader of the Opposition knows full well that there is an issue that is now in front of the courts and I'm not going to comment any further. I've answered 107 questions in the House, I've talked to media and I've talked outside of this House. I'll continue to work with the authorities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: A prominent Liberal recently said, "It's really frustrating to see the level of mistrust and disgust" people have with parliamentarians. He said that someone must show some leadership and actually come clean, and the only way to be able to do that is for everybody to testify under oath. The Premier must hear this a lot, because the person who said this was the federal Liberal leader. Those were his words. Will the Premier take her friend's advice and testify under oath, yes or no?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I think I'll remind the member opposite about the convention in this House and the constitutional convention that exists when it comes to matters relating to—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, how come the Speaker hasn't ruled it out of order, then?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to remind the member from Renfrew he's out of order. Please come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I've stated before many times in this House, there is a constitutional convention in our country where even the Supreme Court has indicated very clearly that if a matter is before the courts, it should not be discussed within Parliament. The kinds of questions that the members opposite and the leader of the official opposition continue to ask is a direct interference in issues that may come before the court.

The Premier, during the course of this matter, has been transparent to Ontarians and has been transparent to this Legislature. She has answered almost 110 questions relating to this matter, and we will leave it to that.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: It's a simple question, and yet the Premier continues to avoid answering it. I'm not asking the Premier to tell us specifics. I'm not asking the Premier to tell us what she will say on the stand at court. I'm simply asking the Premier to answer a straightforward question. I'm asking the Premier if she will waive her parliamentary privilege and testify under oath at the trial of Gerry Lougheed Jr., yes, or no?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

1050

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I will again give a very simple answer to the member opposite, and I hope he really carefully listens to the advice that his own deputy leader, the member from Leeds-Grenville, once gave to us in this Legislature. The member from Leeds-Grenville said, "Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation and let it run its course."

I think the member from Leeds-Grenville was correct then, and I hope he—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case he didn't hear it: the member from Leeds-Grenville. And if he did hear it and he chooses to continue, I'll warn him.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, just like he's trying to speak to me across the aisle, maybe the member from Leeds-Grenville can just whisper in his leader's ear the same piece of advice that we shouldn't be interfering in a matter that is before the courts.

Again, I remind the Leader of the Opposition, who I'm sure has a high regard and respect for the Supreme Court of Canada, that it said clearly that a well-known

rule of parliamentary practice holds that no member of the House of Commons should comment upon any matter that is pending before the courts.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. This Liberal government's record is one of scandal, wasted public money and disappointment. It is no wonder that Ontarians don't trust the Liberals, and it is no wonder that more than 80% of Ontarians don't want this Premier to sell off Hydro One.

When the Liberals last experimented with privatization, we got the Ornge and eHealth scandals, billions of dollars down the drain and literally nothing to show for it.

Why should Ontarians trust the privatization of Hydro One won't be yet another Liberal disaster?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the question that I would put back to the leader of the third party—because she knows full well that the reason we are broadening the ownership in Hydro One is to build infrastructure. She knows that. What she doesn't talk about in her questions and, I'm assuming, in her town halls is what we are able to buy and invest in by doing this, by making this very hard decision.

I would ask the leader of the third party: Which part of the \$130 billion over the next 10 years that we are investing would she not invest? Which projects? Would it be the Barrie line that we're electrifying so that weekly trips will increase from 70 to 200-plus, the GO Transit? Would it be the Kitchener line which will increase weekly trips from 80 to 250? Would it be the Lakeshore East line, the annual ridership up from 10 million to 32 million? Are those the lines that she would cut if we did not make this—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Every single time people open their hydro bills, they are reminded about how badly the Liberals have handled the energy file. Hydro rates have nearly quadrupled since 2003—\$2 billion wasted on smart meters, and another billion dollars wasted on the moving of gas plants.

Ontarians also remember that it was this Premier who said that she would be surprised if the Liberal gas plants cost even \$40 million.

With this record, why should Ontarians trust that this Premier will sell off our hydro system in a way that makes sense to Ontarians?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party has full access to the information about the protections that we have put in place. She knows the people of Ontario will retain 40% ownership of the asset. She knows that we have put protections in place in terms of the ability to remove the board, the ability to remove the CEO. She knows that the Ontario Energy Board, which she has described as an independent body, has been setting electricity rates and will continue to set electricity rates.

I would ask the leader of the third party again: Would she cut the Stouffville line that we're increasing trains on? Would she cut the ride increase on the Richmond Hill line? Would she cut the LRT in Hamilton, the billion dollars that we are investing in Hamilton? Does she think that's a project that should be cut? Those are the things we're investing in, and presumably, those are the things she doesn't think need to be done.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier continues to present Ontarians with a false choice between infrastructure and public hydro. Everyone knows, except perhaps the Premier and the others over there who drink the same bathwater, that this choice is absolute nonsense.

What is particularly troubling is that the Auditor General said that this government managed to waste \$8.2 billion on their infrastructure financing scheme. And now Infrastructure Ontario is embroiled in a fraud scandal.

Given the Premier's record on waste, on energy, on privatization, why should anyone trust her to sell off our most prized public asset: hydro?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party knows we made it clear in our budget and platform that it was going to be necessary for us to leverage assets in order to invest in new assets. In fact, she's acknowledged that she knew that. In fact, she ran on the same plan—fiscally, financially—that we had in place and acknowledged in public that she would look at assets. So she understands that it is very important for us to have the money to invest in these assets. It's not possible to just continue borrowing.

I'd ask her again, would it be the project which is the new alignment of Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph that she would cut? Would it be the Maley Drive extension in Sudbury that she would cut? Maybe it's the four-laning of Highway 11/17 between Thunder Bay and Nipigon. Again, those are all projects in which we're investing that apparently she doesn't think are necessary.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. People's trust in this government is badly shaken. This Premier promised to do things differently, but now they see a Liberal insider criminally charged for doing the Premier's dirty work, all so the Premier could get a win for the Liberal Party. Will the Premier begin rebuilding the people's trust in her government and tell Ontarians exactly what her role was in the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very open with the Legislature, the media and the public about the allegations related to the Sudbury by-election. The leader of the third party knows that. In fact, I've answered 107 questions in the Legislature. Now it's 110, 111 questions. I've addressed these questions in dozens of interactions with the media.

There is a process in place. I have faith in that process. I've co-operated with the authorities. I will continue to co-operate with the authorities. She knows this is a matter that's now before the courts, and I'm not going to comment further on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it's precisely because of answers like that—with 110 questions but really no answers—that the people don't trust this Premier and what she's saying. She has had many chances to rebuild the broken public trust. That's what she came in here saying she was going to do, and I would say that she has failed miserably in that regard. She could have been upfront about getting Mr. Lougheed to offer a bribe to the former Liberal candidate in Sudbury. She could have asked her deputy chief of staff to step aside when she was implicated in the bribery scandal. Instead, this Premier has arrogantly absolved herself of any responsibility whatsoever.

Why should the people of Ontario trust this Premier when she has refused to take responsibility for the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, this is a matter that's before the courts. I have answered many, many questions about this. I've been very clear about the situation from my perspective, and I'm not going to comment further.

When I ran in the election and when we put forward our plan, what we said we were going to do was invest in people in this province, in their talent and skills. We said we were going to invest in infrastructure. That's exactly what we're doing. We said that we were going to increase the wages of some of the lowest-paid people in this province: personal support workers, early childhood educators, developmental support workers. We're doing that. We said that we were going to index the minimum wage. We're doing that.

We have followed through on the commitments that we made to the people of this province. We will continue to do so. That is our record.

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The public trust is important for any government, and yet this Premier seems determined to break that trust at every turn. Whether she's selling off Hydro One without a mandate or being implicated on tape ordering a bribe, the trust of the people of Ontario has been very much shaken. I agree with the Chief Electoral Officer—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I heard what I thought I heard, I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think they told you to tell me, but I will withdraw, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I don't expect that to happen again.

Please finish.

1100

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I agree with the Chief Electoral Officer, who said that references to the Premier on Sudbury tapes threaten the government's integrity. Why should Ontarians trust anything that this Premier says?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This province is at a very important juncture in terms of our economic viability. The commitment that I made to the people of this province is that we would make the investments that will allow us to compete globally, that we will build the infrastructure that is necessary and that we will make sure that our young people have every opportunity to get post-secondary education and get the training that they need. We said that we will make sure that people in this province have retirement security, even if we don't have a federal government that will work with us.

Those are all things that the leader of the third party should be working with us on. She should be supportive. If she is not, then I think she has to explain to the people of Ontario why building a future for this province that is bright and prosperous is not something she would support.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

New question.

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Could the minister explain how his independent review of the Housing Services Corp. failed to turn up the fact that the Housing Services Corp. paid a board member to go on a luxury eight-day, seven-night sightseeing trip with a private driver, winery tours, whale-watching, a visit to a nature reserve and meals at award-winning restaurants in Cape Town, South Africa?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I think the member opposite insists on too strict a paradox to have this government act and do what their government, who put in the Housing Services Corp., refused to do.

The member opposite refers to this as a rogue agency. It is not a rogue agency. It's an agency that you, sir, when you and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Chair, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —rogue agency that they put in place. So we were proud to work with the Housing Services Corp.—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We were proud to work with the Housing Services Corp. to do an independent review to lead to a changing of a number of their practices. The

concerns are legitimate; we share the concerns. We have different choices. We choose to look at what's broken—

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the minister can't explain how a luxury South Africa sightseeing trip slipped through, perhaps he can explain why his review failed to report that Toronto Community Housing is losing \$6.3 million a year because the ministry is forcing them to purchase through the Housing Services Corp., and why the review failed to turn up that housing money is going to pay for trips to England, Australia and California, or for alcohol, or \$300 for flannel shirts and meals in fancy restaurants, including \$8 for water?

How many more of these examples do we have to find before he calls in the auditor and has her open the books so that we can get this mess cleaned up?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: This from the party that downloaded social housing with no supports. They've got a lot of nerve.

Mr. Speaker, I could share with the House that the independent review—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Please finish.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The independent review—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —led the government and the HSC to refine its business practices, streamline the organizational structure, reduce overhead and administrative costs, enhance corporate reporting and transparency, revise board remuneration to be consistent with cabinet guidelines and a number of other changes, including a revisit by the group that did the study.

The new Leader of the Opposition, the member from Simcoe North, has said that when the government does things that are right, he'd stand and applaud. Well, sir, if you want to stand and applaud, you can start any time—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I loathe the idea of throwing anyone out.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. A little over a week ago, the government quietly released a supplement to its budget estimates. It turns out that there was an additional unbudgeted expense that wasn't mentioned in the original estimates, and it's big.

The government has agreed to pay a \$2.6-billion tax bill owed by Hydro One to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp., which will use the cash to pay down the debt. This means there will be \$2.6 billion less cash available for things like infrastructure.

Why is the government spending the transit money on an unbudgeted \$2.6-billion tax break for Hydro One's new private owners?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, under the tax provisions, if an LDC were to sell its assets over 10%, there was a departure tax that was paid by the vendor—not the purchaser, the vendor. In this particular case, Hydro One, as a vendor, is required to pay to itself \$2.6 billion in tax. That \$2.6 billion is being reinvested in its own corporation. It's a total wash. It's a total equalization of receiving from one hand and returning with the other. And the member knows, because this was explained to him in estimates and he seemed to accept it. But in this particular show in here, he decides he is going to try to put an implication of some wrongdoing.

It's perfectly normal and perfectly appropriate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, Ontarians are paying a \$2.6-billion tax bill owed by Hydro One. This expense wasn't accounted for in the budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Please finish.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In exchange for \$2.6 billion in cash, according to the Hydro One prospectus, the government gets \$2.6 billion worth of shares in Hydro One, except we already own 100% of Hydro One. The minister says this transaction is "fiscally neutral." To me, it looks like an accounting trick.

Mr. Speaker, \$2.6 billion in real cash is leaving the treasury to pay off Hydro bondholders. In return, the government will get \$2.6 billion worth of shares in a company it already owns 100% of. How can this be fiscally neutral?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It can be fiscally neutral just by that member listening to what I said in answer to the first question, and that is quite simply that a departure tax is payable by any utility that sells more than 10%—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. The member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Finish, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The government is the people of Ontario. We're paying \$2.6 billion to the government, the people of Ontario, and that is being put back into Hydro One as it moves forward. It's a total wash, and I really don't understand the emotion and the diatribe that we're getting from this member, because it's clear. It has also been cleared by the auditors—

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

1110

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. This summer, the Halton Regional Police initiated the Reducing Rural Speeds Project in the north end of Burlington. This safety initiative aims to reduce the speeds of vehicles travelling along rural roads in order to promote safer driving habits. As part of this initiative, police conducted a summer safety blitz which saw them hand out twice as many tickets to drivers this year than last.

Of the almost 100 non-speeding-related tickets handed out by the police, the vast majority were for distracted driving. Mr. Speaker, distracted driving truly is an epidemic that not only affects those living in my community but indeed all Ontarians. Can the minister please tell members of this House what our government is doing to help prevent this senseless and preventable crime?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Burlington for the question, and also for being an outstanding champion for road safety, not only in Burlington but right across the province of Ontario.

The evidence truly speaks for itself: A driver who uses a cellphone is four times more likely to be in an accident than drivers who are focused on the road. That's why our government is leading the charge against distracted driving. As of February 2010, police began issuing tickets for this completely preventable offence. And with the passing of Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act, in June of this year, drivers now face stiffer fines and penalties upon conviction. In fact, Ontario now has among the highest fine ranges in Canada.

Speaker, our government also made regulatory changes that apply three demerit points upon conviction for distracted driving.

There is no easy solution to changing inappropriate driver behaviour, but our government will continue to work as hard as possible to discourage texting behind the wheel.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I want to thank the minister for his response. We've all seen how distracted driving can negatively impact the lives of others, but it is not just drivers who are affected by this behaviour and these poor choices. All members of this House know that Ontario's roads are amongst the safest in North America, but it is extremely important that we consider the safety of everyone using our roads. This means keeping our roads safe for drivers, yes, but in particular, for our most vulnerable road users: cyclists and pedestrians.

In the minister's response, he mentioned the passage of Bill 31. Can the minister please provide members of this House with further information on how Bill 31 is already making Ontario's roads safer for all road users?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank the member for her follow-up question. She's 100% right: Our government takes the safety of all road users very seriously.

In addition to the distracted driving provisions contained in Bill 31, we've taken significant steps towards improving the safety of pedestrians and cyclists on our roads. This includes requiring drivers of motor vehicles to maintain a minimum distance of one metre when passing cyclists on highways; increasing the fine for those who improperly open or leave open the doors of motor vehicles; and requiring drivers to remain stopped at pedestrian crossovers or school crossings until those crossing the street are off the roadway.

I was very pleased to see that Bill 31, this past June, passed here in this Legislature with all-party support. These provisions, combined with stiffer distracted driving penalties, will help ensure the safety of drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. Speaker, this truly is another great example of how we can work together to keep all Ontarians safer on our roads.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. There are new discoveries in a recent report by Philip Cross. The title, Ontario—No Longer a Place to Prosper, sums up the facts revealed by the former chief economic analyst for StatsCan.

It turns out that the Liberal spending spree was in full swing years before the recession, and growth fell just as much in the years before the recession as it did afterwards. So all their excuses blaming their tax-and-spend policies on the recession have now been debunked. The fact is, Ontario's declining economy is a direct result of failed Liberal economic policy, and it is the Liberals who raised costs, hurting families, seniors and businesses.

When will the Premier realize that she is the one keeping Ontario from realizing its full potential?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the Fraser Institute report ranked Ontario number one in North America for foreign direct investment. I think that's a really good thing.

I think it's wonderful that since August 2014 Ontario gained 64,000 net new jobs. We're increasing the job number in this province, Mr. Speaker. Our unemployment rate has gone down. In fact, unemployment in Ontario is 6.8%, which is under the national average of 7%. We are making investments in order to be able to compete globally.

I introduced the Premier's youth advisory council at the beginning of the day. It's very important to me that we hear from young people. They are the people who are going to be looking for those jobs. They are the people who are going to be creating those jobs. That's why the investments that we're making are so important.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: That response tells us this Liberal government has absolutely no intention of listening to the experts.

If the Fraser report is not enough, we've heard the same facts from the Ontario chamber, the federation of business, the manufacturers' association, and the list goes

on. They all told us the same facts: Since the Liberals took office, all of our numbers and our jobs have headed south.

It's unfortunate they didn't listen to the Auditor General last year. She told us that if the Liberals continue down this destructive path, they will crowd out the services Ontarians deserve. We know what that means in my hometown of North Bay, where they just fired 158 front-line health care workers, half of whom were nurses.

When will this government realize it's their own mismanagement that is costing the people of Ontario their jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I really appreciate the opportunity that the member opposite gave me to talk about North Bay regional hospital. We know that there are some changes under way. Nothing has been finalized. In fact, the LHIN is expecting the final version of the hospital's improvement plan on October 16, in just about a week's time. They're going to review that. They're going to continue to discuss this with the hospital. It's not true at all that 50% of the individuals are nursing staff; it's far less. In fact, many of them will be through attrition. But even more important, it's not even decided yet. This is a plan which still has to go through the LHIN. It has to be approved by the LHIN and the ministry as well.

It's important and prudent—I would suggest that the member opposite read the CEO of the hospital's op-ed of a week ago, where he explained very succinctly why the changes are being made.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Speaker, the Auditor General's report clearly shows that 39% of the CCAC budgets that is supposed to go to patient care actually never reaches any patients. That's almost \$1 billion of public money that never finds its way to patients' homes, to provide the home care that people need and depend on. I've asked the minister before if he knew this, but he did not have an answer.

So I'll ask him again today: Did the minister know that nearly \$1 billion of the money that he sends to CCACs, the money that he oversees, never really gets to the patients who need home care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will do is stand up and defend the hard work of our front-line health care workers in our CCACs, including the thousands of individuals who work as care coordinators, who develop patient plans—they purchase equipment and services for individuals at home. The member opposite describes that as overhead. I don't. I actually think that's an insult to the hard-working nurses and nurse practitioners who are our care coordinators and who are providing that patient care and making a difference to the more than 800,000 individuals around this province who do receive services.

Mr. Speaker, I have accepted, endorsed and agreed with all of the recommendations of the Auditor General. This government intends on implementing every single one of her recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: As you read through the auditor's report, you clearly see the government's failures. The home care system in Ontario is failing patients on eligibility; it is failing on wait-lists; it is failing on care levels and on quality of care. Our home care system is broken, and it needs to be fixed.

The Auditor General's recommendation is that the entire structure of home care delivery needs to change. Does the minister agree that it is the structure that needs to change? Because none of his 10-point plan talks about structure.

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Hon. Eric Hoskins: The 10-point action plan that I released earlier this year was all of the recommendations from Gail Donner and her expert panel that advised us on what to do. She said, very importantly, that form follows function. We made 10 changes that will improve the quality of care. The Auditor General has now given us a road map to allow us to make those structural and governance changes, if required.

But I have to say, I'm not going to take lessons from the party opposite, from the third party, the party that de-listed home care from OHIP when they were government.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Associate Minister of Finance.

Over the past few months, there has been a growing awareness in my community about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. My constituents are pleased to see our government taking action to close the retirement savings gap for millions of Ontarians, particularly seniors.

Businesses in my riding are eager to learn more about our government's plans to enhance retirement security across the province. Businesses are already beginning to make plans for the implementation of the ORPP. Some business owners have spoken and have asked how the government will be phasing in the enrolment of the plan and when different employers will begin making contributions. I know the minister recently announced the enrolment schedule for the ORPP.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please update the House on when businesses will be enrolled in the plan?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member for that very important and timely question. Our goal is that by 2020, every employee in Ontario will be part of the ORPP or a comparable workplace pension plan.

We know that businesses need time to plan in order to implement the ORPP. I heard this throughout my consultations with businesses, particularly small businesses. Our staged approach will help ease the transition for

business. Large businesses without registered workplace plans will be the first to start making contributions in January 2017. Medium-sized businesses will begin in the following year, and small businesses without workplace plans will begin making contributions in 2019.

As well, all employers will see their contribution rates phased in gradually over three years. This is a reasonable, responsible approach that ensures that we balance the retirement security of Ontarians with the needs of business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you to the minister for that response. I know that business owners in my riding will be glad to hear about the steps our government is taking to help businesses plan the implementation of the ORPP. Specifically, I know that small businesses, such as my own in my riding, will appreciate that they have additional time to adjust to the introduction of the ORPP.

Mr. Speaker, again, through you to the minister: Some businesses in my riding offer their employers a defined contribution plan that just falls below the comparability test put forward by our government. They are curious what different options are available to them, and they're wondering whether they will automatically be enrolled in the ORPP if their plans do not meet a comparability test, or are there ways for them to adjust their plans to be exempt from the ORPP. Mr. Minister—

Interjection: Madam Minister.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Madam Minister—I was thinking of Mr. Speaker; he's always on my mind—could you please outline the options available to Ontario businesses—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, I'm on yours.

Minister.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the wonderful member from Ajax–Pickering for that great question and the work he's doing on behalf of his constituents.

Our enrolment schedule outlines that employers who offer registered workplace pension plans that don't meet our comparability threshold will start in 2020. This gives these employers well over four years to adjust their plans, if they choose to do so. For example, a company with an existing DC plan would have two options: They could increase the contribution rates to 8% or they could alternatively contribute to the ORPP. Either way, they would have until 2020 to decide what to do with their existing plan.

Mr. Speaker, this is a responsible, reasoned and proven approach that balances the needs of businesses today with the needs of workers in the future, like our young people here from the Premier's advisory council.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mrs. Julia Munro: Speaker, my question, through you, is to the Premier. The Premier has said that the mandatory Ontario pension plan will be good for the province, yet recent studies show that 90% of small business owners are opposed to the ORPP.

An employee making \$45,000 a year would pay just shy of \$800 towards the ORPP, with their employer contributing an equal amount. While larger businesses may be able to absorb these added costs, smaller businesses will be forced to either reduce the size of their workforce or the hours those employees are able to work.

Mr. Speaker, we all know it's impossible to save for retirement if you don't have a job. How many job losses will it take for this Premier to axe her job-killing payroll tax?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, what a great question from the opposition, because it is important that we talk about retirement security in this province. Just last week, we heard that the numbers of—

Interjections.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, we know that our population is aging. We know that two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace pension plan today. That's why we're taking leadership to implement the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

The member opposite knows full well that the ORPP is not a payroll tax. Let's look at the evidence. The Globe and Mail called this idea "bogus phrasing" and said "this money is really deferred salary for workers to access in retirement."

When people retire, they need to have the opportunity to continue to consume in retirement, and that is what we're doing by strengthening retirement security with the ORPP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Mr. Speaker, again through you to the Premier: Premier, the ORPP's administrative costs are expected to range between \$130 and \$200 per member per year, so a worker who contributes \$800 per year will lose up to 25% of their contributions off the top in fees alone. That doesn't sound like a very good return on investment to me. Ontarians won't be saving more; they will just be losing more off their payroll stub.

Let me remind you: When you feel the strong hand of government in your pocket taking the money, that's a tax. Will the Premier commit to saving jobs and abandoning the poorly planned, job-killing payroll tax?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: As I was saying, the member opposite knows full well that this is not a payroll tax. This is deferred compensation for the members who contribute to the plan. We're ensuring—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shouting people down is not impressive at all.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Nor is making comments while I'm trying to get control.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: From the Canadian Payroll Association: "It is not a payroll tax.... It is a pension plan, not a tax."

From pension expert Keith Ambachtsheer: "People making this claim should be required to take ... economics 101."

Mr. Speaker, this is about ensuring that we have retirement security for the people of Ontario. If we had a willing federal government in Ottawa that would co-operate with Ontario and ensure that we can manage this plan as efficiently and effectively as possible, this would be better for the people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

New question.

MINERAL EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, good morning to you. My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Today, Northern Superior Resources has gone to trial with the Ontario government over its failure to set real guidelines on the mining process in Ontario. NSR is the fourth mining company since 2009 to bring legal action against the government over the exact same issue.

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The failure to get consultations under way demonstrates the misguided priorities of the Liberal government and is paving the path for further disputes. Why has this government failed to do their job in creating a plan for resource development and jobs in the north?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I think the member understands that I certainly can't speak about a specific case that may be before the courts, but I will say that we endeavour in every way and work as hard as we can to work as closely as we can with the companies that are bringing potential opportunities forward in the province of Ontario, as we work very closely with the First Nations and try to bring organizations, groups and communities together for that purpose as well. That will be our continued goal, and that's something we have had great success with in so many ways.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the minister: From 2005 until it lost access to the area of the claims in 2012, NSR spent over \$12 million in acquisition, maintenance and exploration. Other companies like Cliffs, Noront and KWG have equally spent tens of millions and have grown extremely frustrated or given up entirely, leaving the province, all stating that the Liberal government has not set any real guidelines on development.

If the government continues to mismanage mining development in the north, we will see the lawsuits pile up and the jobs will be lost—gone forever.

I ask again, as I've asked several times before, will the minister act now to actually develop a plan for good, value-added job creation that treats First Nations as partners?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We are very proud of the work we're doing with the consultations with First Nations as we are with the mining companies in the province of Ontario, and we have got a great story to tell. It's

unfortunate that the member is choosing to focus on some of the challenges we have when there are such great stories to tell.

We continue to be the number one jurisdiction for exploration in the country, let alone in North America. We continue to have increasing mineral production—\$11 billion in 2014. We continue to open up new mines. The member knows that well, as do all members of the House. Those opportunities will continue to happen. Whether we're talking about Goldcorp's Cochenour expansion or Rubicon Minerals, the new opportunities at New Gold, Greenstone gold—these are opportunities that will require us to work closely together in a very positive way, and, of course, that's something I look forward to continuing to do with my colleague across the House.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

Ontario is home to many of the top-ranked post-secondary institutions in the world. Our universities and colleges are known for their prestigious faculty, dedicated students and innovative programs. I, like many others, enjoy watching to see what new and exciting things will come from our schools each year.

Last month, I was proud to see one of Ontario's great innovators, Ryerson University, achieve international recognition and some phenomenal opportunities with the help of the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. In August of this year, the CEO for the UK-based organization Innovation Birmingham visited Ryerson after six months of communications fostered by the Ontario international offices in the United Kingdom.

In September, on your trade mission to the UK, I saw that Ryerson signed a memorandum of understanding with Innovation Birmingham. Speaker, through you to the minister, could the minister provide more information about this MOU?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Brampton–Springdale for asking the question.

There's a very strong economic tie between Ontario and the UK. We have a shared political and cultural heritage and a similar economic growth pattern. The most important thing in engaging the world and expanding trade and investment opportunities is building relationships. Ontario is eager to develop mutually beneficial commercial relationships with Birmingham companies and organizations.

As the member knows, on my last mission to the UK, Ryerson University signed a partnership agreement with Innovation Birmingham. Under the agreement, Ryerson and IB will launch the Next Big Idea Contest and showcase the possibility of virtual incubation and collaboration. It is already clear that great things will be coming out of this mission.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. I know the ministry has been working

diligently to promote Ontario's trade interests around the world. It is great to hear that an emphasis is also being placed on fostering non-competitive relationships in various countries as well.

I'm sure these efforts will bring about even more beneficial partnerships between countries and allow for further innovation, like we're seeing at Ryerson. I'm particularly excited to hear about the Next Big Idea Contest.

Future relationships can be modelled on the relationship we saw in the UK: two cutting-edge innovators, Innovation Birmingham and Ryerson University, teaming up with a major UK bank and with the Ontario government to help companies, organizations and regions go global.

Speaker, could the minister provide more information about the Next Big Idea Contest and how it will help foster relationships in the future?

Hon. Michael Chan: The Next Big Idea Contest is intended to discover innovative IT companies and provide them with the opportunity to scale up internationally. It has been running in India for three years and is in its second iteration in the UK.

The first outcome of the agreement between Birmingham and Ryerson is proposed to be the second edition of this contest. It will be open to existing Ontario and Birmingham digital media and IT companies, whose services and products can be scaled to reach the global audience.

There will be one winner for Ontario, ready to grow into the UK, and one winner from Birmingham looking to invest in Ontario.

Speaker, I am excited to see what great partnerships and even better ideas come out of this contest.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Associate Minister of Long-Term Care. The provincial auditor tells us the two ministers responsible for health care in Ontario are failing miserably when it comes to living up to their responsibility to protect Ontario's senior citizens.

Here are the facts: You have not brought in standards of care in home care, and you have no standards of care in our nursing homes.

This minister is supposed to be the one protecting our seniors, standing on guard for them and implementing tough standards. On the other hand, she has missed inspection deadlines, issued zero work orders, and as a result, long-term-care residents have died from neglect or abuse.

I ask, will the minister bring in the standards of care? Yes or no?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I thank the member opposite for his question.

The fact is that we have been taking a number of steps to beef up our implementation and our inspections. For example, Mr. Speaker, in 2014, for the very first time, we inspected every single home in Ontario—across the province. What's more, we are continuing this in 2015.

What's really egregious here is the fact that when the party opposite were in power, they forgot to inspect homes at all for long periods of time. For them to say that we are not inspecting is a little rich, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Associate Minister of Long-Term Care: These people are our parents, our grandparents, and the minister continues to neglect them. They're left to sleep in soaking diapers, developing broken skin and bedsores.

It has been 10 years since an inquest made the specific recommendation to this government to bring in standards of care at long-term-care homes, but it has done nothing.

As a result, neglect and death continue to happen. Most recently, sadly, it happened to Fatemeh Hajimoradi and Dorothy Benson, who died from bedsores complications.

I ask, why will the minister not stand up here and admit that when it comes to living up to her responsibilities to protect Ontario's frail senior citizens, she has been nothing short of a very, very bad failure?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Again, I thank the member opposite for his question.

I just want to assure Ontarians and this House that the safety of our residents in our long-term-care homes is my number one priority.

When our families place their seniors in our long-term-care homes, they do so with the trust that we will look after them. I'm very conscious of this trust, and I take that very seriously.

That is why we are committed to providing increased support to long-term-care home operators. In fact, this year we increased funding to long-term-care homes by 2.5%, and since coming to office, we have increased funding for long-term-care homes by 85%.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to continue to say that the safety of our long-term-care residents continues to be a priority.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Constituents have been contacting my office in London and telling us that they have been waiting for years to get an appointment at the London Health Sciences Centre for surgery or to see medical specialists for diagnosis.

London's surgery wait times for diagnostic scans and surgeries are significantly higher than the provincial wait times. Michael Allen, a two-time cancer survivor, was diagnosed in January 2015 as high risk for heart attack and stroke, and he only got into surgery last week after he suffered a stroke in September. Gail Silvestro had to go to Strathroy to see a specialist due to London's wait times and now will be waiting at least a year for surgery in order for her to be able to walk.

The people of London are tired of waiting for this government to take action. When will this government stop failing the people of this province, putting lives and

well-being at risk with appallingly long wait times for crucial surgeries?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. The member opposite didn't have the opportunity to mention that we were the first government in the history of this province to actually begin measuring wait times for important surgeries, as well as ER wait times.

When we began in 2003 to measure wait times, because we inherited the legacy of cuts from the Progressive Conservatives, we had the worst wait times in all of Canada when we came into office. Now, we have the best wait times, the shortest wait times, in all of Canada.

We continue to work on this. We're making hundreds of millions of dollars of investments to continue to decrease those wait times, whether they're for surgeries or for ERs, other processes and services. That's an obligation and a responsibility that we take extremely seriously.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Oxford has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning the Housing Services Corp. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MAX KEEPING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Rare in a city of almost a million people that its entire population would agree that one man was the heart, the soul and the pride of his community, but that's Ottawa's Max Keeping.

Born a proud Newfoundland, he took the nation's capital by storm. Max never forgot what Ottawa gave to him or, for that matter, who he was. What he received he gave back tenfold. He was a philanthropist, donating many hours and millions of dollars for charity, including to our own Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. He was a children's champion. He supported organizations like Child and Youth Friendly Ottawa, and made his newscast kid-friendly. He was the first in Canada to do so.

He was a broadcaster, the public face of CJOH, now CTV Ottawa. Max was a guest in eastern Ontario homes during the supper hour news for almost four decades. He was a trusted face, even when the toughest news was about to be delivered.

He was also a family man. He was devoted to his sons and his grandchildren.

Although Max was the most important person in Ottawa, he never once had an air about him. Instead, he made every single person he spoke to feel that they were the most important person in the room.

When he passed last week, fellow broadcasters, politicians, NHL players, hospital CEOs, farmers—everyone had a Max Keeping story. He was a celebrity we all knew personally, and that was a real credit to his humanity and his humbleness.

His life, how he embraced others, his kindness and his love of community is now our lesson, one which I know will be honoured by Max's family as well as all of us in Ottawa. On behalf of the Ontario Legislature, I want to thank Max for his lifelong contribution to the city of Ottawa, and I wish to convey my most heartfelt condolences to his family and his grandchildren. There will never be another Max Keeping.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to share reflections on two conferences I attended over the weekend in London.

The first was Manufacturing Matters, organized by the London Economic Development Corp. Bringing together more than 400 manufacturers and service providers, this was the largest gathering ever of southwestern Ontario's manufacturing sector, demonstrating that manufacturing remains vital to London's economy.

The second was called The Future of Work, organized by the London Poverty Research Centre. Two leading economists, Armine Yalnizyan and Mike Moffat, presented data showing that in Canada's changing labour market, a job is no longer a ticket out of poverty. In a region that has lost one third of its manufacturing jobs over the past decade, this is a trend that took root early and deeply in London.

At the first conference, we heard about the demand for skilled workers to fill new jobs in advanced manufacturing, and the value of co-ops and internships to address workforce needs.

At the second, we heard about the twin forces of globalization and automation that have led to plant closures, the displacement of skilled workers and a generation of young people facing precarity as the new normal.

My take-away? Not only must we provide young people with opportunities to participate in paid co-ops and internships, but we must also support older workers whose skills are less easily transferred. We must create more affordable housing, increase child care spaces and build transit to get people to work. While doing everything we can to spur innovation, we must also ensure that no one is left behind and that every Ontarian has a place in the new economy.

MAX KEEPING

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to join the member for Nepean–Carleton in saying a few words about Max. Last week, Ottawa lost one of our true leaders, Max Keeping. Max was a journalist, a philanthropist and a true community builder.

As anchor for CJOH nightly news, he found his way into our living rooms for over 30 years, and the news

always included community. He had attended thousands of events for charity over that time. In his career, he raised more than \$100 million.

As a builder, he reminded us all that community matters, and he knew how to bring us together. Max could throw a good party. However, first and foremost he was a champion for children. As a cheerleader for the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario and other causes, he helped us find our way to our pockets to support children's needs: saving the cardiac program at CHEO, more support for children's mental health or scholarships for children in care. He wanted every child to have an opportunity to succeed.

I had the pleasure of working with Max on many occasions, and it was never about Max; it was always about someone else. Communities need individuals who give expression to our collective desire that all of our children have a chance to thrive. Max was ours.

Max, thank you for your unwavering commitment to our community and our children. To his family, our condolences. Max, we will miss you. God bless.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Todd Smith: Fall is in the air, and because it is, that can only mean one thing: Another round of cuts and staff uncertainty at Quinte Healthcare hospitals. To make up for an \$11.5-million funding shortfall created largely because Ontario's Liberal government can't manage money, jobs and services will be cut at hospitals in Picton, Belleville, Bancroft and Trenton. Money is being spent on debt that people in Prince Edward-Hastings want spent on the services they need in their hospitals.

This morning, we learned that in order to close the \$11.5-million shortfall, QHC is proposing a reduction of nearly all surgery services at Trenton Memorial, \$4.5 million in direct care cuts and changes that one QHC executive calls "very hard on our staff."

During the years of this government, QHC has been the recipient of almost continual funding shortfalls from the ministry.

Speaker, if I could, I'd like to direct some comments directly to my constituency back at home: The deficit this government is running is costing you your health care services. QHC has had to come up with \$25 million in cuts over four years to make up for funding shortfalls because the Liberal government at Queen's Park doesn't have any money left. The government says money is going into better home care services, but the Auditor General says services are being cut there too to pay for fat-cat salaries.

The third-largest expense in the budget is how much we pay to service our debt, and it's also the fastest growing. That's why cuts like this have gone from being rare to happening annually.

TAXI INDUSTRY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I rise today to raise the concerns of taxi drivers and limousine drivers across my con-

stituency and across Ontario. Taxi drivers are raising concerns around Uber. Their concerns are that Uber perhaps doesn't pay HST, which means lost revenue for the province and the country. They're concerned that Uber drivers often don't claim that income and that's another source of loss of revenue. They're also raising awareness and concerns around the fact that perhaps Uber drivers don't pay for commercial insurance, which may leave drivers and passengers unprotected. They continue to raise concerns around the lack of training, that perhaps Uber drivers may make roads more unsafe in our province. They also raise concerns regarding the lack of accountability, that drivers are not accountable against specific complaints. Finally, they raise concerns around the safety of vehicles which aren't subject to municipal standards.

Our taxi and limousine drivers provide an essential and important service in our province. They are well-trained professionals whose vehicles meet municipal standards and they provide an important service which must be respected by this government. This government has a responsibility to address their concern and I ask the government to address the concerns raised by these drivers. They certainly provide a very important service. They are well-trained professionals who deserve that respect.

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EVENTS IN BEACHES-EAST YORK

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to spend a moment here to tell you a little bit about what I did during the opportunity of the legislative recess over the summer.

Certainly, a great highlight for me was when the Premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne, came to Beaches-East York. During her visit, we went to Toronto East General Hospital, where she made a very significant funding announcement: \$125 million over the next year for improvements for hospitals across the province, including \$1.7 million for Toronto East General Hospital to renew its aging infrastructure. So the Premier and I toured the hospital's new and very unique Chest Centre. It's the only facility in Toronto providing various lung health services under one roof. The new CEO, Sarah Downey, who has been there for about six months, is just doing a fantastic job.

We then went on to Centre 55, a great community hub in Beaches-East York. The Premier and I met some of the hundreds of campers from across the community. We were greeted by Debbie Visconti, Nancy Culver and Jason Balgopal, who run the place. The campers were very interested in the Premier's visit and they asked her lots of great questions like, how did she get into politics? It was excellent.

We then went down to Queen Street, where we went to the Beacher Cafe. Thank you so much to Kumiko Martineau and her staff, who made our visit on the patio such a great experience.

I was also pleased to take the Premier out for some mainstreeting on Queen Street East. We dropped in at

Tori's Bakeshop, Arts on Queen, and the Remarkable Bean, a wonderful coffee shop in the riding, but we held off on going to the matinee movie at the Fox. Maybe we can do that another time.

So my appreciation to all the residents and the businesses we interacted with that day. It was a wonderful, wonderful visit.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to stand here today to commend the organizers of this year's International Plowing Match and Rural Expo, held in Finch, Ontario, in the great riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. What started as a dream for Stormont Plowmen's Association member Jeff Waldroff turned into the largest event in the history of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I want to commend Jeff and IPM chair Jim Brownell for organizing such a great and extremely successful event.

Almost 83,000 people attended the 2015 IPM. The community assembled over 1,200 volunteers, with over \$500,000 in donations and another \$600,000 in in-kind work. The event was capped off with terrific weather that allowed the visitors to take in all the many sites. Whether it was the dancing tractors, the many exhibitions, farm machinery, seed companies, service delivery companies, or dealers of all kinds, it really was a great event. It was a chance to showcase what we feel is the best area of Ontario, in eastern Ontario, where people came down and saw the great crops—agriculture at its finest.

We're looking forward to next year. It's in Wellington, Ontario, and it will be another great event.

DAVENPORT-PERTH NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to recognize a fantastic organization in my riding of Davenport, the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood and Community Health Centre.

The DPNCHC, as it is so fondly referred to, supports people in the Davenport-Perth area who are suffering from economic and social barriers, and empowers them to enrich their lives through the community. It also provides a space for people to meet and connect across all ages and cultures. From the Ontario Early Years Centre to the Youth Leadership program for teenagers to computer training for seniors to the EdgeWest clinic, this facility prides itself on providing services to everyone.

On August 20, I was honoured to invite Premier Kathleen Wynne to the DPNCHC for a tour and to host a community round table meeting with her and community organizations to discuss issues that we face in Davenport.

Events like this show how our government understands the importance of health and community centres like this one. I'm proud to continue to uphold this commitment by supporting the DPNCHC through the Ontario Trillium Fund.

Mr. Speaker, on September 12, DPNCHC celebrated their 30th anniversary. I was humbled to be a part of the celebrations and to see a whole community come together and recognize the wonderful work that this organization does for Davenport. I want to thank executive director Kim Fraser for leading this organization into its 30th year and ensuring that it continues to be such an integral part of this community.

Thank you very much, DPNCHC, for all the work you do. Happy anniversary.

SENIOR CITIZENS PERSONNES ÂGÉES

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Last Thursday was the International Day of Older Persons. As a former social worker and co-owner of a retirement residence, I understand the value seniors provide to our communities. It is their contribution we can build upon, and their guidance and experience we can learn from to improve our society. We must appreciate the contribution of seniors and the wealth of knowledge and wisdom they bring to our province and our communities.

The Canadian population surpassed a milestone last Tuesday: For the first time ever, there are more senior citizens than children.

Il est prévu que le nombre de personnes âgées vivant à Ottawa fera plus que doubler au cours des 20 prochaines années, avec une projection de 250 000 individus. Nous devons donc planifier en conséquence.

I am proud to share that in 2013, the city of Ottawa was inducted into the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities by the World Health Organization. This is thanks to the city's Older Adult Plan and Age-Friendly Ottawa, an initiative led by the Council on Aging. With the first term of the Older Adult Plan finishing at the end of 2014, the city of Ottawa is currently refreshing the action plan for the 2015 to 2018 period.

This year, the Council on Aging of Ottawa received over \$18,000 through the Ontario Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant to collect data to measure the city's progress in achieving their age-friendly community goals. This is a great initiative on the part of the Ontario government, and I hope other communities take part and take advantage of it.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. I thank all members for their statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just want to say at the outset that because I'm speaking in about 25 minutes to the Advancing Women conference on agriculture, I can't stay in

the House to hear the comments from my honourable friend from Huron–Bruce and my honourable colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I just wanted to let you know that. I'm not skipping out; I just have a speaking engagement, so I wanted to let you know that. Thank you so much for extending me that courtesy.

It's my honour to rise in the House today, so close to Thanksgiving, in celebration of Ontario Agriculture Week. This week is about recognizing and celebrating the people who bring good things that grow in Ontario to us, Ontario's hard-working farmers. These are the people who look out at their empty fields each spring morning not knowing what will happen or what the next few months will hold, wondering whether mother nature will co-operate to make those fields bountiful by our fall.

Every time, every year, time and time again, farmers remain committed to the cause of helping to feed Ontarians, Canadians and, indeed, the rest of the world. Farmers are unwavering in their commitment and determination to this cause. Ontario farmers are passionate about what they do. They have to deal with the uncertainties they face each and every day.

Farmers are deeply rooted in tradition, yet are progressive and innovative. They are constantly mastering new tools and new technologies, creating new methods to be more effective to help make their farms profitable, while growing the highest-quality and safest food in the world.

Ontario's farmers produce more than 200 agricultural commodities, everything from quinoa to kale to ginseng to bok choy. They are recognizing and fulfilling today's global demands, creating specific meats, produce and other agricultural food products to meet the needs of consumers around the world and right here at home.

Ontario farmers are, at the same time, keeping our economy strong. In 2014, Ontario's agri-food exports were \$12.5 billion, with people in regions as far as the Middle East, Japan and China enjoying great things that are grown, raised and harvested by our farmers right here in Ontario.

Ontario is home to a diverse range of agricultural products. Ontario is the largest area for winter wheat, grapes, apples, peaches, sour cherries, pears and plums in Canada. We grow almost 99% of the country's ginseng, which is known as the highest quality in the world. We have 1.5 million maple taps. More than half of Canada's greenhouses are located here, and we have the largest share of the Canadian nursery and sod areas.

1320

As a sector, Ontario's agri-food industry employs more than 780,000 individuals in communities right across the province, contributing more than \$34 billion in GDP, second only to the auto sector.

Ontario's agri-food sector, as it has historically been, is a cornerstone of our society, a major force in the province's economy, building and contributing to our high quality of life, envied around the world.

Ontario's farmers are the best environmental stewards of our farmland because they depend on that land for

their livelihood. Mr. Speaker, this is a challenging task, and farmers take it seriously each and every day. These are the people who have made sustainability their watchword and are finding new ways to reduce waste and to farm in an environmentally protective way while growing enough food to feed our province, nation and indeed the world.

Ontario farmers support their communities through youth programs and food donations to ensure our rural communities are a vibrant place to live.

As always, I want to recognize the member for Sarnia–Lambton, who came up with the idea that farmers' surplus could be donated to food banks—and get a tax credit. That's a very important initiative.

These are the people who depend on our government to invest in our infrastructure, create jobs, work with local leaders and help rural Ontario thrive.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario farmers work tirelessly to make this province great and provide us with the safest, highest-quality, most delicious foods each and every day.

Our government—your government—is proud to support Ontario farmers by creating a supportive and dynamic business climate that helps them to play a valued role in growing our economy and growing Ontario's future.

Let's give Ontario farmers our support and thanks not just here today or this week during Agriculture Week, but year-long.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize those 1,053 farms that are in the wonderful riding of Peterborough.

Remember to recognize and thank those who grow, harvest, or make your food when we enjoy our Thanksgiving meals this coming weekend with friends and family.

I want to remind this House to take the opportunity to give to those who don't enjoy the same privileges that you and I enjoy each and every day.

Enjoy Ontario Agriculture Week, everyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's an honour to stand today to recognize Agriculture Week. On behalf of Patrick Brown, our leader of the PC Party of Ontario, and my colleague Toby Barrett, PC critic for the agriculture, food and rural affairs file, and our entire caucus, I would like to say thank you to all farm families across Ontario.

I must say that I appreciated the overview that Minister Leal shared moments ago outlining our overall industry. It's easy to recognize how the agri-food industry in Ontario lends itself to be second, if not first, in overall economy significance. Thank you to him.

As many farmers across this province are working this week to harvest their crops for the year, we have to recognize so many contributions to Ontario by celebrating Agriculture Week.

Agriculture has been an important part of Ontario's history since before our first Lieutenant Governor, John Graves Simcoe, surveyed land for the purpose of farming homesteads for the early Loyalists who would settle in Upper Canada. These proud farmers cleared land, raised livestock, grew crops to support their families and

communities—a tradition which I am pleased to say still continues to this day in Ontario.

So important are these men and women to Ontario's economy that former PC Party MPP Bert Johnson, who proudly served from 1995 to 2003 for the riding of Perth, stood in this very House and received the support of his fellow members to officially recognize this industry through Ontario Agriculture Week.

Interjection: A great guy, Bert.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: He is, and I thank him for that. He's still a wonderful advocate for Perth county as well as our agri-food industry.

I'd also like to recognize that Local Food Week, which is now celebrated in June, serves as an excellent way to bring together the farmers who produce our food, the retailers who sell it, the restaurants that prepare it and those who enjoy it every day. Agriculture Week serves to remind us all of the value that primary agriculture and its related value-added industries bring to our province and our economy.

But we cannot simply praise without offering our support to them as well.

I found it interesting that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, just moments ago, spoke to how farmers are constantly mastering new tools and new technology. A perfect example of this was how over the last couple of years, farmers and industry were reacting and improving their technologies and their work habits to minimize bee kills. Unfortunately, last year this Liberal government implemented a policy that will hurt Ontario farmers. Of course, I'm talking about the regulations banning neonicotinoids. As my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk pointed out a couple of weeks ago, 28,000 members of Grain Farmers of Ontario have had to go to court to seek a stay of the regulations banning these neonicotinoids. Farmers are looking for predictable, bankable and sustainable paths forward, not knee-jerk actions that result in economic damage that is significant and irrevocable. Ontario agriculture should be a safe investment based on sound policies.

And speaking of safe, I know right now Ontario farmers have been successful in bringing in silage corn, and they're busy combining beans, following up immediately with planting winter wheat. So I just would like to respectfully remind everyone to share the roads.

To change tune a little bit, Paul Harvey's famous 1978 "So God Made a Farmer" speech was revised a couple of years ago for a Super Bowl ad, and I'd like to encourage everyone to take a moment to look up both. He opens by saying, "And on the eighth day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, 'I need a caretaker.' So God made a farmer." From there, he invokes for the listener a scene that has changed little in almost 40 years. A powerful statement captures and shows how dedicated, hard-working, loving and selfless our farmers are: "God had to have somebody willing to ride the ruts at double speed to get the hay in ahead of the rain clouds and yet stop in midfield and race to help when he sees the first smoke from a neighbour's place. So God made a farmer."

I'd also like to recognize that not only do we need to recognize farmers, we need to recognize farm families.

It's so great to hear that Minister Leal is now on his way to participate in Advancing Women in Agriculture. It's a tremendous program, and I congratulate the planners, and I tell them today that I look forward to catching up with them later this evening.

I also will say that during the CWP outreach program, we'll be taking a look at how women have made a difference in the agri-food industry as well.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to stand here today, on behalf of my leader, Andrea Horwath, and the NDP caucus, to recognize Ontario Agriculture Week.

The agri-food sector in Ontario is a \$34-billion business, second only to the auto sector—and I agree with the president of the federation of agriculture, Don McCabe, who said it's number one because you can't eat cars. It's a very good comment.

We produce in Ontario a myriad of products, from milk to bok choy and ginseng—it's 200 products, and we produce them all. We produce many of them better than anyone else in the world. We have some of the highest safety standards, the strictest regulations. Regulations aren't a bad thing if they make sense, because they assure people's safety, and we do that.

Ontario Agriculture Week is the week before Thanksgiving. I think I can speak on behalf of farmers: Farmers hope not to be celebrating Ontario Agriculture Week at receptions and at meetings, and even at a party or two, because where they want to be this week is in the field. They know that Thanksgiving is a celebration of the harvest, and they know that you can't celebrate the harvest until it's in the bin. No one knows that better than a farmer.

Probably the best feeling in the world for a farmer is a beautiful day, a bumper crop, and all your equipment is just humming. It's a beautiful feeling, Speaker, a feeling that can't be matched.

But along with those types of feelings comes the other types of feelings, where it's raining, where your crop is damaged by hail, where your animals are dying. We also know the other side, and that's why we truly do celebrate Thanksgiving. We are thankful for everything that we are able to reap off the land.

1330

I think Ontario Agriculture Week, this week, is a time when people who aren't involved in agriculture should truly sit back and thank the people—we have a huge sector, but the people we should really be thanking this week are the actual farm families: 37,000 farm families in Ontario who are involved in the basis of agriculture. They're the people right now in the combines, in the tractors with grain buggies—and if you don't know what a grain buggy is, it's nothing like a baby buggy. Those are the people. And not just the farmers but the elevator operators. Koch elevators in Earlton are open 24 hours a day. If it's combining, they're open, and so are the other elevators in my area and across the province. Those are the things we should celebrate.

Farmers have to deal with so many variables—like the weather, like animal health. What they need, where it can be achieved, is stability. They need stability from their government. I think there are several examples where they don't feel that stability is here right now. For grain farmers of Ontario to take the unprecedented step of launching legal action regarding a regulation that the government has put in regarding neonics—and not everyone agrees it was a good strategy, but it shows their frustration. They want to protect the environment. They did huge strides before the regs came in. They need to be respected. The minister said he respected the strides that farmers have been making, but some of the regs don't respect some of the professionals in agriculture, like certified crop advisers. We need more in agriculture than talk about respect; we need action on those issues.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Trans-Pacific Partnership that has been signed today by 12 trading countries. The devil is always in the details. For some agricultural commodities, this will be a good deal, but for some—supply management is one—the jury is still out. The devil is in the details, because one thing that supply management has always been able to achieve in this country is fair prices for consumers and farmers without government subsidization. Now, in this agreement, we're talking about compensation. That's a huge step backward. We need to look at the details and decide whether or not this is a good deal for Ontario farmers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I see a member working toward her desk with a point of order. The member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on a point of order, and I'd like to take this opportunity to correct my record from September 24. It was my privilege to share a poem written by a David Lindeman in tribute to fallen workers. It was my understanding that he had passed away. However, I have heard from him, and I am pleased to correct my record. He has, in fact, not passed away and is alive and well and still advocating for fallen workers. I'm pleased to correct that record—probably not as pleased as he is that he is still alive and well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members do have an opportunity, on a point of order, to correct their record, and I'm glad this one was able to be done on behalf of his family.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

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

"Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

"Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

"Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

"Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

"Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

"We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax."

I fully support it and will send it with page Calvin.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was signed by Mr. Michel Laurin from Chelmsford in my riding, and it goes as follows:

"Petition Regarding Gas Prices.

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition and will ask Alexander to bring it to the Clerks.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it's entitled, "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water." It reads as follows:

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

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

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I am pleased to add my signature to this and to support it and to send it down with page Gabriel.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government’s proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan ... is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

“Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

“Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

“Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

“Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

“Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

“We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax.”

I agree with that and will be giving it to Duha.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by my neighbour, Angela Inglis:

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there’s no return; and

“We’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

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

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I wholeheartedly support this petition and will send it to the desk with Siena.

1340

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

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

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I agree with this petition, sign it and leave it with page Kelly.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas accessibility of health care services is of critical importance to all Ontarians, including those living in rural areas;

“Whereas patients currently travel significant distances to access acute in-patient care, emergency, diagnostic, and surgical services available at the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital;

“Whereas the unique challenges of geography and a large population of seasonal residents currently rely on health care services provided by the current two-site model for Muskoka;

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

“That the Ontario government ensures that the current range of core hospital services provided at both the Huntsville District Memorial Hospital and the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital located in Bracebridge is maintained in the future.”

I agree with this and have signed it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another wrong choice.

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there’s no return; and

“Whereas we’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“Whereas we’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“Whereas we’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

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

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’ll affix my name and will give it to page Siena to take to the table.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

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

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and” our wonderful “province of Ontario.”

It gives me great pleasure to support this petition and provide it to page Grace.

TAXATION

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

“Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn’t necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

“Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

“Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

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

“To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses.”

I support this petition and will send it with page Eastyn, from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai une pétition qui a été signée par M^{me} Thérèse Labelle, à Val Caron, dans mon comté :

“Privatiser Hydro One : une autre mauvaise décision....

“Attendu que la privatisation d’Hydro One est un aller sans retour; et

“Attendu que nous allons perdre des centaines de millions de revenus fiables d’Hydro One pour nos écoles et nos hôpitaux; et

“Attendu que nous allons perdre le plus gros atout économique provincial et le contrôle de notre avenir dans le secteur de l’énergie; et

« Attendu que nous allons payer de plus en plus pour l'électricité, tout comme ce qui est arrivé ailleurs. »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« D'arrêter la vente d'Hydro One et de faire en sorte que les familles de l'Ontario, comme propriétaires d'Hydro One, en bénéficient, maintenant et pour les générations à venir. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Jacob de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

“Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a decent work agenda by making sure that Ontario's labour and employment laws:

- “—require all workers be paid a uniform, provincial minimum wage regardless of a worker's age, job or sector of employment;

- “—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

- “—ensure part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time, permanent counterparts;

- “—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

- “—support job security for workers when companies or contracts change ownership;

- “—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temp agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

- “—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

- “—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

- “—offer proactive enforcement of laws, supported by adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the law;

- “—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

- “—require a \$15 minimum wage for all workers.”

I sign this petition and leave it with page Anna.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas an industrial wind turbine development is to be constructed approximately 3.5 kilometres west of the village of Crysler by EDP Renewables; and

“Whereas the project will consist of 25-50 mega wind turbines and this has raised concerns by the citizens of Crysler and surrounding area related to health, safety and property values; and

“Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approval;

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

“That the Ministry of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments, and the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines.”

I agree with this petition and will pass it off to page Matthew.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was signed by Ms. Sue Leblanc from Hanmer in my riding. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major budget shortfalls leading to a decrease of 87,000 hours of nursing care...;

“Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

“Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are reduced all across the hospital;”

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

“Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect beds and services.

“Increase overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER PROTECTION AND ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OVERSIGHT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR RENFORCER LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA SURVEILLANCE DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 30, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this government bill, the member for Toronto—Danforth had the floor. He still has time remaining. I recognize the member for Toronto—Danforth.

1350

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to complete my remarks in this second debate on this bill.

Where I had left off I had noted that there was a fundamental problem with this bill in that it was sidelining the Ontario Energy Board and setting Ontario up for a repetition of the huge problems we saw with the installation of smart meters, ensuring that the Ontario Energy Board wouldn't have the power or the authority to view the rationale and the business case for putting in new transmission lines.

If the Ontario Energy Board had the authority—and it will—to simply review the bills to see that in fact if a hydro tower is put up, it was put up at a reasonable price, that means that the Ontario Energy Board in this new regime would not actually be able to say that a transmission line was useless, was redundant, was simply a cost burden on the ratepayers of Ontario. That, Speaker, is a profound problem with this bill.

The government has put together a bill that has some elements that speak to consumer protection—that's the sugar-coating of the bill—but the critical elements that relate to the Ontario Energy Board are ones that can only bring grief to the people of this province.

The Ontario Energy Board is being diminished in its role. Even though it is being given some extra powers, its central role in controlling costs is being undermined by this government. I'll speak about that, those mechanisms of undermining, right now.

I have to say that I followed the Minister of Energy's speech on this bill. He ranged very widely. He set the goalpost. We can talk about just about anything, given what the Minister of Energy had to say. In this bill, the OEB is going to have its system of intervenor funding change. Precisely what that will be is not specified in the bill, but there is a substantial chance that the provision of funding to independent consumer advocates in the course of assessing a hearing, a proposal before the board, will be undermined.

Currently the OEB pays intervenors who appear at Ontario Energy Board hearings to represent consumer interests. The OEB doesn't use an intervenor funding model, where they pay intervenors in advance; they use a model that's intervenor cost recovery. If an intervenor brings forward information or evidence that the OEB judges to be valuable, useful and not frivolous, then that intervenor can recover their costs.

Now, there are risks with any system you use. In this system that we have now, the intervenor may not be able

to recover their cost. They may put a fair amount of money up front and that can make it very difficult for consumer groups to protect the interests of ratepayers—consumers, generally.

An approach that's used in Alberta and Newfoundland is one in which jurisdictions hire a dedicated consumer advocate to represent consumer interests. That seems to be where this government is headed. A ministerial briefing deck on Bill 112 says the new system would "take the form of an independent third party that would provide analysis on how consumers are impacted, or a more streamlined engagement process determined by the OEB."

There was a letter put forward by the OEB in April of this year announcing phase two of its multi-year review of the intervenor framework, noting that "a number of North American jurisdictions have independent consumer advocates who are part of the regulator or separate government departments."

We have a system now that has its problems, but we have a system now where consumer advocates, consumers themselves, can independently come forward and make their case before the Ontario Energy Board. They can question witnesses. They can question documents. They can make arguments. They are directly the consumers or advocates selected by consumers, not an advocate that is paid by the board whose continued employment is at the sufferance of the board or the pleasure of the board. We need a system in which it's very clear that consumers are not dealt out, that their voice is not silenced.

The system we have has worked reasonably well for the last 35 years or so, but I have to say to you, Speaker, that this change in support for consumer intervention at a time when the government's number one shield to the argument that rates will go up—and they will; they will go up very substantially. Their shield, their argument, is that the OEB is a regulator and it will protect us. What's happening in this bill is that a significant piece of that protection, the independent voice of consumers and consumer advocates, may well be cut out. That is a step backwards for the people of Ontario and is a risk to the rates.

I want to note another thing that this government is doing to undermine the regulator. In August 2015, the government posted a proposal to the regulations registry to change Ontario regulation 53/05, which governs how the OEB calculates rate increases with respect to the construction of nuclear projects. There are no details, but the purported aim of the proposal is "to reduce volatility in OPG's regulated nuclear rates during and following the period of Darlington refurbishments, while permitting an orderly recovery of prudently incurred costs."

For many people with experience in cost overruns on energy mega-projects, this sounds a lot like construction-work-in-progress—CWIP—financing. Those who are familiar with this industry and with this kind of financing are very worried that the government may be creating a recipe for massive cost overruns and waste. I think it's

indicative of the lack of government respect for the regulator that, by regulation, they are trying to change whatever decision can be made by the regulator.

Ontario Power Generation proposed construction-work-in-progress financing for the Darlington refurbishment in 2010. CWIP financing allows generators to recover the costs of projects while the work is in progress, contravening a standard regulatory principle that ratepayers should only pay for electricity they are actually using, from generation projects that are “used and useful.”

Construction-work-in-progress funding forces present-day consumers to pay for energy that future consumers will use. With CWIP financing, consumers also pay in advance for planned construction that may not even take place, or pay contractors that may go out of business with the work unfinished, or pay for expenditures that may turn out to be inappropriate after the final bill is added up and after the cheques have been cashed.

CWIP financing shifts risk onto the public and reduces incentives for contractors to finish on time, or for project managers to keep a lid on costs. With nuclear projects—as you are well aware, Speaker—this risk is especially huge.

There is a good reason why construction-work-in-progress financing is illegal in most jurisdictions and the OEB has repeatedly rejected it in Ontario. Yet this government is moving to sideline the regulator which they say will defend the interests of ratepayers, so they can make a very substantial decision about how nuclear generation is financed in this province, just as in this bill they are sidelining the regulator when it comes to determining or assessing whether or not new investments in transmission infrastructure are going to be assessed for whether they are reasonable and necessary. All that will be assessed will be whether or not the bills that come in are legitimate.

A recent article in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution describes huge cost overruns and delays at the construction-work-in-progress-financed Vogtle nuclear plant in Waynesboro, Georgia. This government may use the OEB as a shield against arguments about rocketing increases in prices, but substantially, in this bill and outside it, they have been undermining that regulator.

1400

On another tack, I want to talk about section 58.1 of the bill. That’s the requirement that, “A distributor that is licensed under this part to own or operate a distribution system shall maintain its head office in Ontario.”

Then it goes on to detail what that means:

“(a) the principal executive office for the distributor and its subsidiaries is located in Ontario;

“(b) the chief executive officer and substantially all of the officers with strategic decision-making or management authority for the distributor and its subsidiaries principally perform their duties at that principal executive office ... in Ontario; and

“(c) substantially all of the strategic decision-making, corporate planning, corporate finance and other executive

functions of the distributor and its subsidiaries are carried out at that principal executive office or elsewhere in Ontario.”

In fact, the new Hydro One or any of the new privatized local distribution companies or regional distribution companies that are going to arise out of the government’s actions on changing the Electricity Act could maintain a small office on Toronto Street, like Conrad Black did with his firm Hollinger, where you had executive functions in one small building.

But to run a multi-billion dollar operation, you need engineers, you need IT specialists, you need people who do billing, you need people who operate call centres. Speaker, you may be aware that a few years ago, this government issued a directive to Hydro One that it could not offshore. It could not send abroad to India, China or the United States any of those functions: the call centres, the IT management, the engineering. From now on, the chief executive officer and the major executives, who can probably fill a small office building, will have to be here, but all of the back office functions can be offshore. Speaker, as you are well aware, we have people graduating every day from universities and colleges around Ontario who have the skills you need in engineering or information technology to run this system. Increasingly, what we see is a drive to offshore those services.

I had to make a call recently to a newspaper about a problem with delivery, and it was very clear from the accent that the person was operating out of a call centre in the United States.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: How do you know that?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Ma’am?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Americans move to Canada all the time.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Sometimes you ask.

Speaker, the government is setting things up for offshoring large volumes of back office functions with Hydro One and making it possible for all the small, privatized or large, recently privatized transmitters and distributors to do the same. This protection for work in Ontario is entirely inadequate.

I want to move on to the whole matter of regulating energy marketers. I know that many of us in this room have had to deal with the results of energy marketers landing on people’s doorsteps, pressuring them to get into their basements to look at their meters, pressuring them to get their bills. We know the history we’ve had in the last decade in Ontario with people who have been taken to the cleaners by energy retailers.

I want to note that in June this year the Ontario Energy Board put out a report about energy marketers: Consumers Come First: A Report of the Ontario Energy Board on the Effectiveness of the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010. That report exposed the considerable harm that energy retailers are doing to the people of Ontario. I want to note some of their findings.

“Consumer understanding and awareness ... about the energy sector, retail energy markets” and the Electricity Consumer Protection Act is generally low, “making it

difficult for consumers to understand their choices and make valid price comparisons.” The “need for increased plain language in consumer-facing documents emerged as a common theme during the consultation process,” i.e., documents were written in a way that made it very difficult for a normal person to understand. This is not a fluke; this is not something that happens by chance. The way these companies operate is by sowing confusion and trying to put forward an identity that is very different from the one that they really do have.

The OEB noted, “Roughly one third of current residential and non-residential contract holders surveyed are unaware that they have a contract.... Importantly, 40% of unaware contract holders are consumers with a household income of less than \$40,000.”

These energy marketers prey on people with low incomes, they prey on people with less-developed English language skills, and they prey on seniors. That is the profile of the people who come to my office who have difficulties with these outfits. My guess is that, if you asked any person sitting in this Legislature representing a riding the profile of the people who came to see them about these bills, about these energy marketers, they would say the same thing: seniors, new Canadians, people on low incomes—those are the ones who are getting taken to the cleaners.

The OEB goes on to say, “A majority of residential consumers and more than 70% of non-residential consumers surveyed who entered into contracts did so with the goal of saving money.... However, our research suggests that savings are highly unlikely, at least for residential consumers, and that residential consumers with contracts have in fact paid more than consumers who bought their energy from their utility.” I’ll touch on that a bit further when I look at the comments of the Electricity Distributors Association.

According to the OEB, “Administrative penalties totalling \$2,580,000 have been levied against energy retailers since 2009 for breaches of the rules under the ECPA or the consumer protection rules that were in place earlier”—\$2.5 million; the cost of doing business for companies that operate, really, to put themselves between distributors and consumers so they can pick up the difference.

People are being taken to the cleaners. The government’s amendments are inadequate to protect the public.

My colleague from Kenora–Rainy River has brought forward a private member’s bill to outlaw these retail electricity marketers—with good reason. They take money out of people’s pockets and they give them nothing in return. On average, the Ontario Energy Board found that consumers who had signed five-year fixed-rate contracts, signed between May 2006 and November 2009, were paying 82% more for electricity than they would have paid if they stuck with their utility: “None of the electricity contracts we looked at would have resulted in more money in the residential consumer’s pocket at the end of the term.... More than eight in 10 current contract holders surveyed like having the opportunity to

enter into a retail energy contract if they want one.” The report also says, “there seems to be a disconnect between what consumers say they want and what they are actually getting.”

I found people at the door who didn’t realize that they were being taken to the cleaners, that their bill was substantially more than it would have been if they had stayed with Toronto Hydro, stayed with their local distribution company. These companies are very effective at generating in people’s minds the sense that they may well get savings. They write contracts in obscure language, as was noted by the OEB, so people don’t know exactly what’s going on. They take advantage of people in this province.

The Electricity Distributors Association represents local distribution companies across Ontario. They have an interest in this because it’s their front-line people who have to deal with frustrated customers who are paying an awful lot for electricity, much more than they would have otherwise paid. They don’t see why we should have a system in which, they calculate, \$130 million more every year is paid by ratepayers to these electricity retailers, \$130 million more than people would be paying if they just connected directly with their local distribution company. So no wonder these companies are happy to pay fines in the \$2-million, \$2.5-million or \$3-million range. At 130 million bucks a year in gross revenue, it’s a cost of doing business. It’s a minor annoyance. It’s a nuisance. But for customers, it is a substantial piece of damage.

1410

The Electricity Distributors Association supports my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River’s bill to get rid of this whole field. That’s what this bill should be doing and that’s what this bill is not doing. It allows these companies to continue their flim-flammetry, to go around telling people they’re going to save money when they are actually going to crank up their bills. There’s no good reason for that, no good reason at all.

This bill says that you can no longer get someone to sign a contract at their door. My colleague from Timmins–James Bay, a few years ago, had to deal with a situation in his riding where large numbers of people were mailed a \$30 cheque, and if they endorsed the cheque, that automatically signed them up to an energy retailer’s system. They were put on that energy retailer’s books and they were going to be paying more for power in the future, but they saw the \$30 cheque and a large number of them cashed it, automatically enrolling them in that energy retailer’s program.

These companies may or may not be useful for businesses. There may be some option out there that may offer somebody a break, but for residential customers, these programs are totally a loss, a scam, and the government should be putting an end to them.

This bill is profoundly flawed. It undermines the OEB; it undermines regulations; it doesn’t deal with the whole question of retail marketers and the damage they’re causing to Ontarians; it doesn’t protect good jobs here in

Ontario; and it opens the door to offshoring: puts very limited restrictions on what functions have to be carried out in Ontario by a transmitter or a distributor. The government should be rewriting this bill. This bill is not what Ontarians deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's always a pleasure to stand and to comment on the remarks of my esteemed colleague from Toronto—Danforth.

The bill is actually about, among other things, banning door-to-door energy sales. It's not necessarily talking about smart meters. The bill is about providing the Ontario Energy Board with a bigger stick to make sure that the bad actors who want, for example, your grandmother to show them her electricity bill so that, without her really knowing what exactly has happened, she ends up as a customer of another company—something that I will say that the member did mention—and it's without her knowing what happened and without her indicating an informed consent that this bill is proposing strengthening measures to ensure that those contracts, first of all, cannot be signed at the door. If they are, the offenders are going to feel the pain.

The bill is also about enabling electricity transmission corridors and projects to get built without repeating an evaluation for a project, cutting both costs and red tape. If you're in northern Ontario, for example, and you need to get your power from the grid to your town or to your mine, this bill is going to help reduce that duplication.

It's also significant to point out with regard to the member's comments that Hydro One jobs are in Ontario and are going to remain in Ontario. That's part of the reason that two of the largest electricity sector bargaining units, the Society of Energy Professionals and the Power Workers' Union, have voted overwhelmingly in favour of the proposal to make Hydro One a publicly traded company—hardly the reaction of workers worried about having offshore employees take over their jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I will be up shortly to further add to the debate on behalf of our PC caucus and talk about Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

Obviously, all members have heard much concern about door-to-door salesmen and other issues regarding these contracts that people are often duped into signing—and I'll hit on a couple of articles that were in local newspapers back in southwestern Ontario.

I also find that as the government is talking about consumer protection and the energy system, they're obviously not talking about the impact of expensive energy on Ontario's economy: how it's impacting families, particularly seniors and those who have young kids at home, who are really having trouble in Ontario today making ends meet.

Just a couple of points quickly: The sale of Hydro One, I think everybody can agree, is going to increase the cost of electricity in Ontario.

Secondly, the current government is continuing to sign expensive energy deals with companies. In fact, the deals they're signing and have signed with wind energy in Ontario are going to cost \$60 billion over the next 20 years.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa—Orléans has uttered an unparliamentary comment. I would ask her to withdraw.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I will withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you.

I'm sorry to have struck such a nerve in my two-minute hit.

I'll have more to say when I speak for 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to add my comments here on Bill 112, Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, and to make comments on the excellent presentation by my colleague from Toronto—Danforth.

This is a pretty big bill. Obviously, we've got lots to talk about. We can see that even just in our two-minute comments we're sparking some interesting reaction.

There really are two bills here, as my colleague pointed out. The first one is the consumer protection piece that I can speak more about. That's something I think we're all on the same page about: that we want to strengthen consumer protection, and when it comes to members of the community who might be vulnerable or who might be targeted, we want to make sure they have protection.

There's also the second part of this bill, which would give the government the power to bypass the OEB and push through risky and—as I'm sure they'll be—expensive transmission projects that may or may not be in the public interest. It sounds like, especially with what my colleague said, there is a recipe here for more boondoggles, at the very least.

I'm looking forward to hearing more and learning more about this CWIP financing. That's new for me to understand, and so I hope we will have more clarifications about what the government is really intending with this—the idea of shifting risk on to the public and reducing incentives for contractors to finish on time or for project managers to keep a lid on costs. When we're talking about nuclear projects, those expenses would be astronomical.

Another point that my colleague made: Where's the protection for work in Ontario? We have three post-secondary institutions in Oshawa and graduates who are going to want to hear from this government that there are those assurances.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to join in the debate and offer my comments—similar to the ones from my colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville—and to comment on the speaker.

The bill is very clear about strengthening consumer protection. Every member in this Legislature would have had constituents come into their office where some door-to-door retailers of electricity and gas had duped them into signing something they did not understand. I think this is a welcome piece of legislation by the general public to ban door-to-door sales.

To be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, in my riding there are many residents for whom English is not their first language. I've had a lot of these sales to deal with, and I've had a lot cancelled over time. So I see this as something welcome in my community, and I want to say this is great for my area and I endorse it.

1420

Two members, the speaker and the member for Oshawa, commented on providing distribution service and how the OEB will not have the opportunity to approve, but basically they can review.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you, I sat on two committees that travelled the north, and many of our First Nations communities don't have electricity. The only thing that is holding it back is the distribution lines. If we want to encourage these communities to grow their economy, I think cabinet should be given that authority to direct the OEB in certain areas where we deem it necessary to have electricity to help build the economy in the north. It should be a welcomed venture, so I was a little disappointed with the comments on the other side because I see this as a plus, especially when electricity is supplied by utilities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Toronto—Danforth for his response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank my colleagues from Mississauga—Streetsville, Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Oshawa, and Scarborough—Rouge River for their comments.

This bill is part of the process of selling off Hydro One. It makes it easier for governments to get around the regulator by determining whether or not transmission projects can be built without reference to the OEB to justify its utility and its economic worthiness. That is the most critical thing people need to understand.

The second thing they need to understand is that there was huge pressure in the past at Hydro One to offshore jobs. The obstacle to that offshoring, which was a government directive to the board, has now been made void. This company will be looking for opportunities to take technical, professional jobs that aren't described in that very short list of the jobs that have to be kept in Ontario, and move them to the cheapest wage jurisdictions in the world, wherever that may be. So, Speaker,

you have to understand the guts of this bill being those things before you look at the rest.

I have to say, I was here in 2010 when we debated the Energy Consumer Protection Act, and at that time, comments were made—very similar to those made by the member from Scarborough—Rouge River—that finally we're going to get protection for consumers. We in this caucus at that time said, "This is not going to do it." Five years later, you seem to agree that there's still a problem. We said, at the time, "These people will find a way around. You have to get rid of this predatory practice." They don't seem willing to deal with predatory businesses. That's a problem, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to just say at the outset that I'll be sharing my time with the President of the Treasury Board, the member for Ottawa—Orléans and the member for Beaches—East York.

Speaker, I'm not an expert on energy; believe me. I find it complex, frequently difficult to understand and difficult at the best of times to figure out exactly what's going on. That having been said, in my great riding of Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale—the riding with the longest name because our people have the biggest hearts, and the biggest hopes and the biggest dreams. I hope everybody from ADFW heard that.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes. I know that about 24% of Ontario consumers rely on Hydro One for the delivery of their electrical service, and I hear a lot about Hydro One in my riding—a lot—none of it very good. A lot of people are nodding. There are many who have argued, and I haven't argued it particularly, but I've heard the arguments that what Hydro One needs is a good, strong infusion of private sector expertise. I've heard people say that those that buy into Hydro One make money not based on the price of energy going up, but on the cost of producing and delivering that energy coming down. I understand that, as someone who ran a major bookstore in my town. You didn't make money by adding 20% to your costs; you made money by cutting 20% of your costs to deliver that service. I'm pleased to say that in eight of the nine years I was in business, we did make money, unlike a lot of bookstores across the country.

So we're moving forward with Hydro One and shared ownership. That has caused a lot of confusion and some angst with people, and I understand that. When I get a chance to explain what is happening, and how I originally started out believing the same thing until I was able to talk to more people who knew a little bit more about what was happening—generally speaking, it's an issue that they're saying, "Well, we're going to wait and see what happens. The proof will be in the pudding." I think that's fair.

The member opposite who just spoke, the member from Toronto—Danforth, made the point about how all things are connected, and I believe that to be the case. It would be irresponsible to get into some of the major

changes that we're contemplating without making the related and necessary changes to better protect consumers through the Ontario Energy Board, which, as people need to know and understand, is the agency that actually sets prices, not Hydro One.

Anything that can enhance consumer protection, door-to-door or otherwise, is good. Anything that protects people is good. Enhancing the OEB's ability to levy penalties to people who are not playing by the rules is good. Reinforcing the OEB's ability to ensure reliability and continued service is good. Providing cabinet with tools to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure continues to be built is also good. All of these things are good.

We'll see how it comes out. I'm optimistic that under the leadership of our current Minister of Energy, who has a better grasp of this subject than, I think, any human being in the province of Ontario—I feel buoyed in my confidence around where we're heading, Mr. Speaker, as I sit at his feet and listen to what he is talking about. He really is a very wise man, sort of the Yoda of the electricity business. He really is that.

So I offer those comments up. I'm optimistic. I'm anxious, but I'm optimistic. I think it's going to work out. I think this offers a very good balance in terms of the whole package moving forward. I say to the folks whom I'm privileged to represent, and others in the great province of Ontario: Let's see how it works out. I'm betting it's going to work out pretty favourably.

With that, I'll sit down and yield to my colleagues, as mentioned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Deputy Premier and President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak to this very important bill. Sometimes legislation comes before the House that might or might not have a direct impact on people. This one absolutely will have a direct impact on people.

For me, this is an important bill. It does many things to strengthen the Ontario Energy Board, but the number one reason I am so excited about this bill, and so hopeful that all members of the House will support this bill, is because for once and for all, it bans door-to-door salesmen coming to your door and convincing you to sign off to some other energy plan, taking advantage of vulnerable people, going into neighbourhoods where they know there might be a low level of literacy or a high level of people who don't speak English fluently as their first language. This will put that kind of business out of business, and I am delighted that we are doing that, Speaker.

1430

I'm sure every single member in this Legislature has had constituents come to us and say that they have been duped: They signed up; they didn't realize they'd signed up; they thought they were going to be saving money; they didn't realize how much more expensive it would be. So I really want to say to anyone who might be watching on television, what we all need to do, if people

come to your door and they ask to see your electricity bill or they ask to see your gas bill, is to tell them, then and there, "Get off my porch. Go away." Do not feel you need to be polite to these folks, because what they're doing is trying to squeeze some money out of you. I am really happy that we are eliminating this practice. We will be banning door-to-door sales for these energy companies, and it's what we should be doing as politicians. So I hope that others in this House do remember the people who have come to their offices as they are deciding how they're going to vote on this bill. I hope they do think of those people who have come begging to be relieved of these contracts they had signed without understanding the full implications of them.

This is very much one of those bills that will have an impact on people. And I would think that people in this House would have a special understanding of what happens at the door, because we, in fact, all go door to door during our election campaigns. We know that when people answer the door, they, for the most part, are polite, are interested in what you have to say. I'm going to confess, Speaker, that there may have been times when I actually got someone to put up a lawn sign when maybe they hadn't fully decided how they were going to vote. We know, because we see it, that there are people who will do—

Mrs. Cristina Martins: They're bullies.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, I wouldn't say they're bullied—I wouldn't like to think I bullied them—but they are agreeable to whatever the request is that is made of them.

Let me repeat: If somebody comes to your door and they want to see your gas bill or they want to see your electricity bill, what are we going to encourage people to say?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Get off my porch.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Get off my porch. Go away. Goodbye.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Je suis très fière de me lever aujourd'hui et d'apporter ma voix sur ce projet de loi on behalf of the residents of my riding of Ottawa–Orléans. Bill 112, Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act will be beneficial for Ontarians and many of the constituents in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans.

I think some of my colleagues have highlighted very important points. I must say that this bill, if it passes, would ban, as mentioned, the door-to-door sales of energy contracts. This is something I had heard as a previous business owner managing a retirement residence. A lot of our seniors sometimes are vulnerable. When someone goes to their door or gives them a call, they assume it is a legitimate individual who goes to see them. It is certainly very important for me that once we bring this bill forward, it pass, and I hope the members of the opposition will consider how important it is to protect our most vulnerable in Ontario, and certainly in my

community of Ottawa–Orléans. So banning the door-to-door sales of energy contracts will remove those aggressive sales tactics and give people an ability to better consider the decision to sign an energy contract.

I look at this bill also and I want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that the people who are watching this debate will also understand that it will be extending the cooling-off period for energy contracts from 10 to 20 days in which we can cancel a contract without a penalty.

This legislation enhances consumer protection in other areas of the sector and is part of the long-term goals of the government as laid out in the long-term energy plan. We are taking the proper steps towards protecting consumers, and we will continue to do so.

On this side of the House, we fully understand the importance of investing in infrastructure renewal, and this includes energy infrastructure. That is why it is so important that this bill pass. The legislation will strengthen the Ontario Energy Board's ability to take cabinet's decision on identifying priority projects, and these priority projects will be streamlined once identified by cabinet, allowing for faster energy infrastructure renewals across Ontario.

These energy renewals have a significant impact on my riding. This issue is very important to me and to constituents, given that in Ottawa we do have very harsh winters. We also unfortunately have those days where a deep freeze comes, and freezing rain, and it sometimes damages our lines. We at times have experienced those types of outages, and I'm sure many people have gone through winter outages and understand what it is to be without power.

We understand this, and this is why the Ontario Energy Board will, if this bill passes, be given extra tools to ensure that transmission companies continue to deliver hydro in the event of an emergency. By extending the Ontario Energy Board's emergency powers to transmission companies, we will ensure that fewer Ontarians experience service disruptions in emergency situations. I have to say, Mr. Speaker, as a former business owner of a retirement residence, there's nothing worse than not having power for our seniors.

These changes to consumer protection and to the Ontario Energy Board are needed. Ontarians have told us that we need to ban door-to-door sales, and we will be doing just that. We will be adding further consumer protection in regards to energy contracts, and the OEB will be expanding consumer representation in hearings. All of these changes and enhancing the OEB's emergency powers for transmission will be to the benefit of Ontarians, and we'll be one step forward towards our goal of our long-term energy plan.

It gives me great pleasure to pass to my dear friend from Beaches–East York to continue this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the government whip for her very kind passage of this debate over to me, just passing the baton.

We've heard some tremendous information already about the importance of contracts and at-the-door salespeople, and I'll maybe talk a little bit about that, but I think it's important to put in context the history of where we are with this bill. In 2010, when we first came out with the Energy Consumer Protection Act, we put a bunch of measures in place which were designed to protect consumers against aggressive sales tactics and other such measures. Four years later, in 2014, the Minister of Energy—of course, that was before my time in the House, but it was a time where the minister said, "Let's take a look and review what the Energy Consumer Protection Act is doing. Are there areas where we can improve on consumer protection in order to make the work of that group even better?"

It's interesting as a backdrop to realize how many fewer complaints there were under energy supply as a result of the 2010 amendments and changes that were made. The system was working, but there were certain areas that maybe needed to be tweaked, hence why the Minister of Energy went forward in 2014 with the review. Now what we're seeing is the effect of the recommendations that are coming out of that review in terms of these new protections in the act.

My sister bought a new house in an area not far from where I live—my sister Diana Potts, a wonderful woman. She's the meat, the glue that keeps our family together. I was helping her move in the day of her moving in, and on her move-in day, while she was all upset and frantic and "This goes here," an energy retailer came to her door. I wasn't around at that particular time, but later in the day she said, "I didn't know what to do. But look, I've got a whole new energy contract for my house here, and I'm going to get a brand new, shiny gas water heater."

I was a little cautious about what she had signed, and I went down to look. They were going to replace a water heater that was a year and a half old. They had got a hold of the bill, and—you know, to show up at someone's door in the midst of a move is obviously the kind of tactics we want to get away from.

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But we have to understand that the bill strikes a balance with the ability of third-market retailers to still do their marketing door to door; they just can't sign contracts there. If they want to sign a contract, there's another mechanism to go on. They can sign contracts online, through the Internet, but you still know that's a consumer who's actually making the effort to go to a place because they want to try to take advantage of the benefits.

Those of us who are gamblers in the House—and I'm sure there are many—know that the house always wins. So sometimes, with respect to these contracts, you're taking that kind of a gamble: Are the rates going to go up? Do you get a fixed rate? So people can make those decisions online, but as our government whip told us, they now have 20 days, if this bill passes, and then 10 days to reflect on it and maybe change. So that's really important.

I also want to talk a little bit about how important the changes that we're making to the OEB are, particularly around decisions where the government wants to maintain control over new hydro transmission infrastructure.

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: That's exactly the point; thank you to the member, because we are retaining that direction and control. In the context of this whole debate about broadening the ownership of Hydro One, we are seeing once again how it's the OEB that provides the protective measures that we need, both in terms of rate increases and in terms of major development decisions of where transmission lines go. This isn't only to protect against critical transmission infrastructure in the areas that are covered by Hydro One, but this goes to every other LDC in the province—municipally owned, privately owned, jointly owned. It's so important that the OEB continues to have that, so we're providing the OEB with additional measures of protection.

Many of us saw the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada last week, which very clearly—at the Supreme Court of Canada level—upheld the right of the OEB to do the reviews necessary, question the kinds of expenses that were going onto the books of the LDC—of Hydro One, in that case—and question how they were going to pass those costs on to the ratepayers. The court was absolutely crystal clear in upholding the powers of the OEB. What you're seeing here now are even greater strengths that the OEB will have.

I keep telling my people in my riding of Beaches—East York all the time about the misinformation that's being spread by people all over this province that hydro rates are going to increase dramatically as a result of broadening the ownership. What we know is that the OEB—so the decision to broaden the ownership has absolutely nothing to do with the potential increased interest rates on generation capacity, because they're not generators. They are transmitters, and they're the local customer delivery agent.

What we are going to see in a broadening is the chance for a board of management, under new private sector discipline, to provide the services more effectively and more efficiently. The opportunity will come when they go back before the board. If the board thinks they're doing such a good job, being so much more efficient, there will be downward pressures on transmission rates in this province, which will reduce the bills for all our friends in rural Ontario, which will potentially reduce bills for people—providing that service to Toronto Hydro, for instance.

This is a good piece of legislation, and I look forward to all of your support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to be able to stand and have a two-minute comment regarding the speakers we had earlier, in the past 10 minutes, with the government.

The first speaker definitely talked about how he thinks things are going to be good at the end of the day and to

trust the minister to go forth with the sale of Hydro One. It's hard to sell when 80% of the people of Ontario are against the sale to start with. This government has removed the Ombudsman from overseeing what's going on at Hydro One after a scathing report that this government failed in its delivery of hydro to this province.

When you look at, let alone the billings—I had a constituent of mine who had a bill for over \$200,000 a few years ago: a mistake by Hydro One, but you can imagine the terrifying news when she opened up her bill and saw this bill, knowing that this big corporation, run by the Liberal government, was causing this undue hardship. And it's across the province that you hear that. But the fact that the Ombudsman is moved away—now it's all in secrecy, this reported sale. The first step they do is they hire a CEO for \$4 million a year. I would think, as an average Ontarian, looking at what's going on with the sale of Hydro One—and for the first speaker to actually say, "Trust them"—I think I'd be quaking in my boots, as an average Ontarian, to see where Hydro's going to go.

The last speaker was talking about how hydro was going to go down, but their own long-term energy report is already claiming that hydro rates are going up 40% in the next few years already, without even discussing Hydro One. For him to say, "Your rates are going to go down in rural Ontario"—the other part of the hydro bill is going up 40%—I think, is ridiculous.

If you look at rural Ontario, you just have to look in my riding for what you guys have done. Since 2008, this Liberal government's policies have scared off 6,000 manufacturing jobs from my riding alone. We need to be able to be competitive. One of the best ways to be competitive is with our energy rates. You have made a mess of the energy system.

You can have this bill, where the Treasury Board president is saying that all salespeople are evil and they're out to get you, but I do have to say, at the end of the day—next election, 2018, you will hear at the door, to any Liberal candidate, "Get off my porch. Quit squeezing money out of me."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As always, I'm glad to be able to add my two cents, or two minutes, to the debate. I appreciated the comments from our Liberal counterparts, first from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As he said, "Anything that protects people is good." While I'm inclined to agree with that, I think our job here in the House is to make sure it isn't just good, but that it's good enough, that it's the right good.

In fairness, as my colleague from Toronto—Danforth pointed out, back in 2010 when they were debating consumer protection, they thought it was good, but as we stand here now, perhaps it wasn't good enough. I think it's up to us to ensure that that is, indeed, the case. As he said, "We'll see how it comes out." Well, I'd like more assurance than that. In fact, Minister, in your own words, you're betting it's going to work out pretty favourably. I hope you are right, but I would ask that we not—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Trust me.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Please don't yell at me to trust you.

Please stop gambling with our affordability or our utilities, our job security and our services.

Also, oddly enough, we heard the Minister of Energy referred to as Yoda, with his presentations about energy. While I may not be at the cabinet table and I can't possibly imagine those conversations, I appreciate hearing from this minister that it's much like he's channelling Yoda. So I will give it right back to you and quote Yoda, which I wouldn't have thought I'd have the opportunity to do here in the Legislature: "Remember Jedi strength flows from the Force. But beware. Anger, fear, aggression. The dark side they are. Once you start down the dark path, forever it will dominate your destiny."

Please keep the lights on. Please don't sell off Hydro One. And, "Mind what you have learned. Save you it can."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: It is my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act. I want to tell you that this bill is really important because it does some things that are key to this province. Essentially, it answers the calls we've been hearing for some time from consumers out there. What this bill is attempting to do, and proposes to do, is strengthen the ability to deliver energy to consumers out there and make sure that we are protecting them.

What we are going to do is a couple of things. We are doing this by strengthening the Ontario Energy Board Act and making sure that the enhancements include banning door-to-door sales. We have been hearing for years from consumers that aggressive people come to the door at times and make life difficult for some of our friends and neighbours. This bill is going to try to ensure that that doesn't happen anymore.

In addition, it is going to give consumers a direct voice in OEB proceedings. That means giving people out there—regular folks—a chance to have their say when they need to have their say. It's also going to be reinforcing the OEB's ability to ensure reliability and continuity of service to all customers in the event of a failing transmitter or distributor. Imagine how important that is when it comes to energy.

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These are just some of the things that this bill is trying to do, but it's really about protecting Ontario consumers and giving regular folks out there, like my neighbours, a stronger voice and making sure that, when we need to, OEB will have the ability to institute stronger compliance, ensure reliability, and bring in oversight practices that will ensure that we are consolidating activities, and enabling the OEB to give consumers, as I said, a stronger voice in hearings and proceedings.

Most importantly, I do want to address what the member opposite said. He said we made a mess of the energy

system. I just want to say to the MPP for Elgin–Middlesex–London that I remember when brownouts were happening. I remember when the lines were held together by tape and glue. And when we came in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions or comments?

One of the government members has the opportunity now to reply.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd be happy to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm absolutely shocked, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite didn't have a second minute that they wanted to reply. Maybe they've said all they need to say on this bill—and that's a good thing.

I would like to start by saying that it's as if the members of the opposition party want to have it both ways. They talk about the Ombudsman report and the scathing—I think he used the word "scathing"—indictment of that business. Then they're upset that we're trying to privatize part of it, to broaden the ownership so we can provide private sector discipline to its operations and make it a much more consumer-friendly organization. You can't have it both ways. If you believe what the Ombudsman had to say about what a badly run organization it is, you should welcome this opportunity we're doing here.

I also want to comment on what the member from Oshawa had to say. It's always a pleasure, listening to her. She brought in this wonderful Star Wars analogy, and Yoda, and the cautions—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Oh, the minister too? Well, I wasn't here for that part of the speech, but thanks for raising that.

I would like to bring in my own cinematic reference, if I may, Mr. Speaker. It's as if the third party has reached into this Hydro One opportunity as a precious little ring in Lord of the Rings. It's their little precious, Speaker. By all accounts, they will defend it against all odds, and for what purposes?

The reality is, this bill demonstrates that we will have an opportunity at the OEB to strengthen and protect consumers in a way that wasn't being done before. Speaker, the transmission costs that I spoke about very clearly—the member wanted to take it out of context. It's not about what the generation rates will be; on the transmission side, which is what Hydro One is responsible for, it's going to have downward pressures because it will be a better-run organization, and you all know it. We look forward to your support so we can move this thing forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak this afternoon to Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, although I can't really believe we're looking at a bill with that title, which was intro-

duced by this Liberal government, in light of the energy policies that they've brought forward—in fact, many have said the “disgraceful Liberal energy policies and decisions”—that we've seen here in Ontario over the last 12 years. I could speak for the entire 20 minutes about how ironic that is, and why.

To begin with, there is the unprecedeted letter warning about poor decisions by this government on oversight in the electricity system, signed by the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the French Language Services Commissioner, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, the Financial Accountability Officer, the Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Environmental Commissioner and the Integrity Commissioner.

Then there are the industrial wind turbines that are being forced on rural Ontario without their consent and which are proving to be an environmentally detrimental and expensive foray by this Liberal government—not to mention, as several others have this afternoon, that this government has blindsided ratepayers with the fire sale of Hydro One. But I suppose we should take this as proof that better oversight is desperately needed, so any movement in that direction is good to see.

The philosophy of the bill itself is not something that we, as the PC caucus, disagree with, although there are certainly aspects that need improvement. As our very qualified PC energy critic has indicated in his leadoff remarks, our caucus will be supporting this bill. This is a government bill in a majority government, so I think we can safely assume it will find its way to committee. I hope that at that stage, the government will take seriously the concerns being raised on this side of the House and work with the opposition to improve Bill 112.

The Ontario energy market has become extremely complex. Our electricity system is owned and operated by public, private and municipal corporations. It is difficult to navigate for families and small businesses who are trying to understand what their options are, how they can bring their energy costs down, and who they can appeal to when they have a problem.

The ban on door-to-door sales of energy contracts is a very positive element of this bill. While this is much less of a problem than it once was, stopping the practice altogether is for the best. The industry is supportive of these changes, I believe, and I'm sure every member here has had to help a constituent try to get out of one of those horrible contracts and understands how problematic they actually are. They take advantage of people who are struggling to pay their bills as it is and who often don't understand the implications of what they're signing.

One type of contract, in particular, is causing huge problems across this province and especially in my riding. The salespeople who descended on Lambton-Kent-Middlesex communities and families on behalf of the wind energy companies and who went door to door in the municipalities trying to sign farmers to wind leases have wreaked havoc on our rural communities. The repercussions of these contracts, which were signed, in many cases, before the farmers fully understood what

they entailed, are being felt today and will be felt long into the future. Thousands of acres of prime farmland—the best our country has to offer—will never again grow food for the people of this province because of the environmental impact of these industrial wind turbines.

Wind companies employ lawyers to put together intensely complex leases that are 50 pages or more long and which favour the wind company in everything. These contracts are brought to farmers by unlicensed, unregulated persons who are well-versed in the art of closing a deal. I have heard of cases of negotiations going on until 3 a.m., with these representatives working every advantage and pressuring farmers to sign these leases. We have seen how this has pitted families against families and communities against communities. The check and balance to this type of exploitation was municipal oversight, but this Liberal government did away with that, stripping rural communities of their authority to accept or reject industrial wind turbines to clear the way for wind energy companies to turn up at people's doorsteps and do whatever was necessary to close the deal.

Now, I hope this bill in its final form will look out for farmers who have seen their farmland destroyed by the pouring of hundreds and hundreds of metric tonnes of concrete for each turbine that is erected, not to mention the conflict generated within communities that have to live with the decisions made by individual farmers who were pressured and wooed at their doorstep to allow a company to put a turbine on their property. People don't generally blame the farmers in these situations; even the most ardent anti-turbine advocates realize that many farmers were induced to sign bad contracts.

I wish the zealous attitude this government now has toward protecting people from these types of contracts had extended to the implementation of the Green Energy Act and the thousands of contracts that were signed in its wake. These contracts that may not be in their long-term interest are exactly the sort of issue that needs to be addressed in a bill about strengthening consumer protection in the energy sector. But in that case, instead of trying to solve the problem, the government decided to subsidize it.

Yes, protections are needed, but as my colleague the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke has pointed out, this bill is too far-reaching. The 20-day cooling-off period for energy products is fine for the type of contracts I was talking about, but it is completely unreasonable for other energy products. It's excessive and unrealistic. If someone wants to purchase something to help conserve energy and they go visit a website to find a product that suits their individual needs, this bill proposes that the government should prevent that purchase for 20 days. It's a great talking point to say that the 20-day cooling-off period is robust consumer protection, but when we actually pause for a moment to consider the real repercussions of this measure, it's clear this is a case of the nanny state and the government thinking the people of this province can't make decisions for themselves. We

can't use the idea of protecting people as an excuse to run their lives.

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Even in Consumers Come First, a review of Part II of the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, a report put together by the OEB, it's made clear that consumers want to have choice. Consumers who have an energy contract, who formerly had a contract, or who have never had one, all agree that they want the right to enter into a retail energy contract if they want one. That certainly needs to be respected, Mr. Speaker. If someone wants to go online and buy a thermostat to help regulate their energy consumption, we need to get out of their way.

I have calls coming into my office all the time from people who simply cannot afford to pay their hydro bill. I think all MPPs—in fact, I know that all MPPs in this House have heard the same from constituents in their own ridings. These people are afraid they won't be able to have heat or lights through the winter, or that keeping the power on will mean they can't buy their kids shoes or feed them breakfast.

The cost of electricity for the average Ontario consumer has jumped by more than \$1,000 from the day that Dalton McGuinty was elected Premier until today, and it is only going to keep getting worse. This government is raising hydro rates by 42% over the next five years, and now they want to throw up barriers to people seeking some sort of solution.

Inflation in this province is about 1.2%, while energy prices have tripled. The price of energy is so far out of whack, it almost makes any other discussion about harm reduction in this sector seem laughable. Don't get me wrong: People need all the help they can get when it comes to their hydro bills, but more often than not, this government is aggravating the problem rather than offering a remedy.

This bill would impede the delivery services and the purchase of products which are in no way comparable to the energy contracts that are the actual real problem. If alternative and innovative products are being brought to market, potentially by companies right here in the province of Ontario, we need to support a process that gives consumers fair access, especially when it comes to products that are intended to help bring hydro bills down and conserve electricity, because that's what is best for Ontario families and our environment.

There needs to be changes made to this bill to refocus the target of this blanket 20-day period so that it reflects what the real problems actually are. Limiting consumer choice in energy conservation products, which I assume is a sector that is going to be experiencing skyrocketing demand as hydro bills continue to rise in Ontario, is not protecting consumers; it's actually hurting them.

We would love to see the other side of the House, the government, putting forward something that would bring electricity costs down rather than driving costs up. It should be said that if the people of this province had a government that could provide access to affordable electricity, there wouldn't be demand for these energy

contracts. You can certainly understand how someone would be lured into signing a sketchy contract or buying a questionable product, when they face month after month after month of high and ever-rising hydro bills. They have been driven to desperation by this government and their disgraceful energy policies, so when someone shows up at their door or puts up a website offering a chance to get their hydro bills under control, they jump at the chance.

While it's good that this government is trying to solve the problem of unscrupulous business practices surrounding energy products, I think it should be acknowledged that this government did a lot to create this problem in the first place, and these contracts wouldn't be as financially devastating if energy costs weren't so high to begin with. It's a classic case of "government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem."

I think this bill also overreaches by mandating that you cannot pay an agent a commission for selling a product. Commission is far from unique to the energy sector. Rewarding high-achieving salespeople is a perfectly legitimate business practice used by companies that sell \$10 T-shirts, all the way up to real estate agents who collect commissions on purchases worth millions of dollars. Banning commissions in this sector does far more to handcuff companies than it does to actually protect consumers.

I come from a retail business background, Mr. Speaker, so I know that most of the time, the people who are best at selling, who have moved more product out the door, are the most helpful, knowledgeable and personable. It's not because they trick or pressure customers into buying. In many cases, commissions can lead to a better experience for customers. We're taking measures to inhibit unscrupulous business practices, such as banning door-to-door sales, which make it unnecessary to take this further step of forbidding companies from rewarding hard work.

I don't see how this government, the Liberal government, can be comfortable handing out Pan Am bonuses worth millions of dollars, when we don't even know the final numbers on what these executives delivered, but then turn around and tell energy companies that they must pay a flat salary to their employees regardless of performance. I guess they're consistent, though; they don't think what you get paid should have anything to do with what you actually accomplish.

The Minister of Energy and his parliamentary assistant focused in their remarks on this bill on "empowering the Ontario Energy Board" and enhancing the OEB's capabilities in core areas. For example, this bill will allow the OEB to develop an agreement with the Electrical Safety Authority with regard to the provision of sharing documents, records and information.

It would also allow the OEB to authorize a transmitter or distributor to carry on a business activity other than transmitting or distributing electricity directly. I hope that this government has learned from Ornge when it comes to government agencies seeking out new opportunities

for business activities. That's wisdom that should be passed along to the OEB.

What I would like to know more about is what safeguards and conditions will be in place to ensure that these decisions are made in the best interests of the people of Ontario. Less than a year ago, we all remember hearing from the Auditor General that neither the Ministry of Energy nor the Ontario Energy Board did a cost-benefit analysis of smart meters before plunging ahead with that program.

As we all know, smart meters were first estimated in 2005 to cost \$1 billion, though the final price tag was much, much higher. This was a major project, a serious investment of taxpayer dollars. Given the disastrous results of the smart meters, it's clear the stakes were very high, yet the OEB, which is supposed to protect ratepayers, didn't bother doing a cost-benefit analysis until after the commitment to implementation had been made. It makes me wonder if the energy minister, the ministry and this government are also failing once again to do a cost-benefit analysis as they sell off Hydro One and hand off new powers to the OEB, which so recently failed taxpayers with smart meters.

I would like to know what is going to be different. What is actually going to change? The mandate of the OEB is to protect ratepayers. That was clearly not top of mind when it came, as I said, to smart meters. In fact, the minister spent a good deal of his leadoff on this bill talking about the fire sale of Hydro One, which the Auditor General has warned this government about because it gets rid of the oversight that allowed the failure of the smart meter program to come to light.

The Auditor General also analyzed the data that has shown that between 2006 and 2015, the Green Energy Act and the global adjustment have cost Ontario's energy consumers \$50 billion. These are shortfalls in the electricity system that are going to have to be paid for. When the OEB sets the rates, they will be aware of what the provincial ledger looks like. This government is creating an untenable financial situation in our energy sector for which taxpayers are on the hook.

I would also like to hear more from the minister on the enhanced powers for cabinet to expedite the creation of transmission infrastructure. The act includes a mechanism that would allow for cabinet to designate the construction of key transmission corridors as a needed priority. Is there a guideline or other criteria for what qualifies a project for getting fast-tracked? Will this be a transparent process that won't leave our municipalities guessing why their project may have been bumped down the list? Transparency has been sadly missing with this government. I hope that we will see measures taken to ensure that cabinet is impartial and fair with what projects they choose to expedite, and that this can actually be verified.

My colleague from Perth–Wellington has a timely motion before this House which calls for the government to guarantee that government-held ridings and opposition-held ridings be given equal and transparent

consideration on infrastructure funding. That's a philosophy that should be applied to the expediting of projects as well as their funding, and I'd like to commend my colleague Mr. Pettapiece from Perth–Wellington.

I think this bill, though, is on the right track by requiring the Ontario Energy Board to establish a process where the interests of consumers can be represented in proceedings before the OEB. I'm shocked that such a measure wasn't already in place, when the interests of consumers should be at the forefront of an organization that is funded by and is intended to protect consumers in Ontario. As I've said, ratepayers in this province need all the help they can get.

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This is a small step in the right direction by a government that has been sprinting in the wrong direction for 12 years and, quite frankly, not changing course and not making decisions that are going to make life more affordable for families and businesses in the province of Ontario. If this government really wants to protect consumers, I would suggest getting hydro prices under control so they can afford heat and light without having to sacrifice other necessities.

Mr. Speaker, we need a government that makes Ontario great again, a government that reins in wasteful spending, lowers taxes on families, makes energy affordable and creates conditions for good jobs to return to our province.

We need an economic plan for the future of Ontario. The Liberal government has made intentional decisions to drive Ontario and our great people down. This is not the Ontario I want for my child. Let's pass legislation to create hope and opportunity again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again, I'm pleased to rise and make comments on the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and his thoughtful comments on Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act. I think we've had some lively debate so far today and I know that that's just beginning, because when we're talking about protecting members of the public, that's an important topic.

One of the things I thought was interesting that the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex had brought up is that I think everyone in this House can understand how people can be lured into those sketchy contracts, as he put it, that members of the public are struggling to pay their bills, to budget for life, for surprises, to just manage in their everyday day-to-day. They're always looking for a way to keep costs down, to stretch that dollar that little bit further, and so when someone comes and knocks on your door and says, "Hey, I've got a great way for you to save some money, because your bills are going through the roof," there isn't anyone who wouldn't want to trust that opportunity. So I think this is very important, that we've got a bill before us that endeavours to stop that practice. But as the member had pointed out, this government did a lot to sort of create this mess in the first place.

I appreciate his reminding us about Pan Am bonuses. I thought it was an interesting comment, that perhaps we're seeing that what you get paid doesn't necessarily have anything to do with the work you do, and I hope that that's not the case. Anyway, just to repeat that thought.

I would also echo his question, "What safeguards are in place to ensure that decisions are being made in the best interests of Ontarians?" As this debate unfolds, I hope that government will make that clear to us and to Ontarians, because, as he said, transparency is lacking. Imagine how much we can't see now. Imagine how little we'll be able to see when we can't afford to keep the lights on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm pleased that our government is committed to putting energy consumers first and putting into place legislation that protects consumers. So it gives me pleasure to stand up in this House this afternoon to speak to Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act.

Bill 112 proposes legislative enhancements to the Ontario Energy Board Act and the Energy Consumer Protection Act. If passed, one of the many enhancements this bill will provide is an increase in consumer protection by amending the Energy Consumer Protection Act, including banning door-to-door sales of retail electricity and gas contracts.

I'm very proud to represent a riding like Davenport that is so diverse, a riding that is home to many newcomers from many different countries who do not have English as their first language, and a riding that is home to so many seniors who, too, do not have English as their first language. Many of these newcomers and seniors, but especially the seniors, have contacted my office numerous times as victims of aggressive sales tactics at the doorsteps of their home. As the member from Toronto–Danforth said earlier, it is the newcomers and low-income families that are being taken to the cleaners. I couldn't agree more. It is these vulnerable people that we need to protect.

The protection of Ontario's energy consumers is a top priority, and that is why our government introduced the Energy Consumer Protection Act in 2010. Yes, we have seen, since 2011, the number of complaints against retailers significantly decrease, but more needs to be done.

The passing of this bill would provide the type of protection that my constituents in Davenport need, that those of Toronto–Danforth need, and that all Ontarians across this province need, to be protected against aggressive door-to-door sales practices and to be protected from being taken to the cleaners.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I noted that my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex left about a minute and 39, so I was wondering if I could have his extra time, because I've got a lot to say here.

It's a pleasure to hear his comments in regard to this bill, the consumer protection act and oversight. He and his family have been long-time owners of a Home Hardware franchise. I believe they have to go to their consumers and tell the truth right off the bat, or they wouldn't be in business for the many years that they have been.

I've listened intently all day to the debate in this House, and I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the oversight, the smart meters and the hydro prices under control that he was talking about.

This government has allowed our energy sector to fall through the cracks big time. We're paying the highest rates in North America. It's great, in some ways, that we're going to have some protection for consumers. I certainly support those, and as he said, we'll be supporting this bill. But there needs to be a lot more, and we should be focusing on the bigger picture of hydro.

Earlier in the debate, I believe the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the President of the Treasury Board, and the Deputy Premier made a comment about "Get off my porch." I'm going to quote that: "Get off my porch." Well, I trust that had they gone to the electorate and said they were going to do a fire sale of Hydro One, they'd have heard a lot of "Get off my porch." I think the next time, if they go through with this, when 80% of the taxpayers say, "Do not do that," they will hear, "Get off my porch."

We are here to ensure that there's legislation truly to protect. One of the key things they did in the most recent time was they actually removed the Ombudsman—the removal of accountability and oversight—and yet they actually bring in bills saying, "We're going to protect the consumer." I see just the opposite there, if you will. They're saying one thing and doing another.

In this case, they're horrible contracts. There have been a lot of horrible contracts, such as the Green Energy Act, under this government, and the fire sale of Hydro One will be an equally horrible contract if they prevail without listening to Ontarians, who truly want to ensure that we have the province, the services and the programs that we deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Protecting the public: There is no greater need, be it on the phone or at the door.

Let me tell you a story, not directly related to what the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex had to say.

My mom will be 92 in a couple of months. A couple of years ago, her phone rings, and there's a voice on the other end and the voice says, "Hi. Do you know who this is?" My mom says, "No," and she says, "Your granddaughter."

"Oh, Lacey?" She took a guess.

"Yeah, yeah, that's me. I didn't know if you'd recognize me. I've got a sore throat and a cold. Listen, I'm in trouble. I'm in Montreal. I've had an accident. I'm going to be in jail for a while. I need bail money, but don't tell Mom and Dad, because I'm really embarrassed by it. Can you go to the bank and send me some money?"

My mom is 90 years old. So she goes and sends a couple of thousand dollars. The phone rings the next day, and they want another couple of thousand dollars, only this time, “Go to the post office and get it in money orders.”

My mom goes to the post office, but there’s a new person working there, and she couldn’t get the money orders, so she goes back to the bank. But then the guy from Wells Fargo calls, doing a security check, and says, “Mrs. Hatfield, what’s going on? Why do you need this money?”

Mom says, “I can’t tell you. They told me not to tell.”

And buddy says, “Any time they tell you not to tell your son or your daughter, that’s the time you”—so I get the phone call. My mom says, “Is Lacey there?” and I say, “No.”

She says, “Oh, it must be true,” and I say, “What do you mean, ‘must be true’?”

“She’s in Montreal, in a car accident.”

I say, “She’s gone to Mac’s Milk. She just left two minutes ago.”

Anyway, we put a stop on the second. My mom was out \$2,000; we put a stop on it. But there are people out there who will go after the 90-year-olds and the most vulnerable in society and take advantage. That’s why this bill—be it at the door or on the phone or whatever, we must do whatever we can to clamp down on the people that will do this sort of thing.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

We had our four questions and comments; I apologize. The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex can reply now.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I’d like to thank the member from Oshawa, Davenport, my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, to whom I must give \$5 afterwards because he gave a shout-out to Home Hardware—thanks for that—and also the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who I think told a very compelling story. It’s one that, growing up in the hardware and lumber supply business, we heard many times, with elderly people being taken advantage of, so it does happen all the time.

Of course, as our critic for the PC Party for the portfolio of energy said, we will be supporting Bill 112 and would like to further strengthen this bill at committee.

I said in the beginning that there has been a number of media stories about consumers being taken advantage of. I’ve got a couple here, just local stories, one in particular from the London Free Press talking about people being taken advantage of by door-to-door salespeople, especially in the energy sector.

I would like to get on the record just one more time: I dedicated a lot of my remarks to the fact that these farmers and families in my riding and across rural Ontario really are being taken advantage of by wind turbine companies. They were sold a bill of goods, and the government really needs to listen and realize that a lot of these families and farmers have been put in a really tough position by some of the leases that have been signed.

When we’re talking about strengthening consumer protection, that’s one area I’d like to see at committee that this bill be strengthened.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m very pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents that I represent in London West to join the debate on Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

This is the long title of the bill—the official title of the bill. I am referring to the bill deliberately by that official title because I think it captures much more accurately what this bill is all about. It really reflects the intention of this legislation, which is to amend these two separate acts in two very different ways. That is much different from what the government would like to present as the intention of this legislation when they refer to it as the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act.

As I mentioned, the official title clarifies that Bill 112 is actually two very different bills, and only the first part of Bill 112 has really anything to do with consumer protection. The second part of the bill, which includes amendments to the Ontario Energy Board, or the OEB, really does nothing to protect consumers. In fact, the amendments that are proposed in Bill 112 will do the exact opposite. They will undermine consumer protections by eroding the power of the Ontario Energy Board to review and regulate large-scale electricity transmission and distribution projects that are deemed by the government as priority projects. This will give the government the ability to exempt projects like the privatization of Hydro One. We have all heard from constituents that Ontarians feel that they have a right to be part of the decision-making on that incredibly valuable asset, but of course that will be exempted under this legislation.

This is the fire sale of one of Ontario’s most treasured public assets, and we believe strongly that it deserves scrutiny and that the OEB should have the mandate to review this decision and this direction from the Liberal government and determine whether it is indeed in the public interest. We have heard a resounding consensus that Ontarians do not believe that it is in the public interest, and they have yet to see any evidence from the government that would suggest that it is.

We have heard repeatedly during question period the government reassuring Ontarians not to worry: “You will have protection from rate spikes that we know are going to happen in the wake of the privatization of our electricity system, but you will be protected because the OEB is there. The OEB will monitor hydro rates and will ensure that consumers are treated fairly, that they are protected.”

One wonders, surely: If the government actually was sincere about wanting to strengthen electricity system oversight, which is what the bill claims to do with its short title, if the government was truly interested in and committed to protecting consumers, then why is it not

allowing the OEB to review the sale of Hydro One? Instead, we are seeing, in this bill, cabinet being given the authority to make an order declaring that a transmission project is needed as a priority project.

This would allow the government to bypass the needs test process that is currently required by the Ontario Energy Board Act, a process that has served Ontarians for years. Currently in this province no transmission or distribution project can go ahead without the approval of the OEB. In most cases, this requires a formal hearing or some kind of public review. During that review process, the OEB is mandated to determine whether the project is in the public interest, whether the interest of consumers will be served by the transmission or distribution project, and whether consumer interests will be protected with respect to prices, the reliability of the energy supply, the quality of the electricity service and the promotion of the use of renewable energy sources. It is only if the project is deemed to be in the public best interest by the OEB that it can be approved.

Bill 112, the bill that is before us today, allows the government to bypass this public-interest needs test. It allows cabinet to make an order declaring that a transmission line may be needed as a priority project. If such a declaration is made, the bill says that the OEB “shall accept that the construction, expansion or reinforcement is needed when forming its opinion.”

Electricity and energy advocates from across the province have all raised red flags. They have all expressed significant concerns about the implications of allowing the province to bypass the needs test that has been in place through the OEB, since what this effectively does is open the door for the government to push through politically driven pet projects like we see with Hydro One. It gives the government the ability to go full steam ahead, without any kind of public process, without any kind of regulatory oversight, to take on risky and expensive transmission projects that may not be in the public interest.

It is not clear to us on this side of the House why the government needs the power to bypass this important needs test process.

1530

We've heard the Minister of Energy claim that the changes are necessary to give the government the authority to initiate transmission projects, as if they did not already have that authority. It's important to keep in mind that the government has all the power it needs to initiate and champion priority transmission projects. There is no reason whatsoever for the government to seek additional authority to push through transmission projects without review from the Ontario Energy Board and without determining whether the public interest is served.

For obvious reasons, the government would like to keep the focus on the first part of the bill. They know there is a huge need for consumer protection from aggressive door-to-door salespeople who employ unethical, shady and sometimes ruthless practices in their interactions with people as they try to sell electricity con-

tracts. These electricity retailers too often prey on seniors. They prey on vulnerable people: people on fixed incomes, people who may be newcomers and don't have English as their first language, people who may have low literacy skills and are intimidated by someone at the door aggressively asking them to show their hydro bill. Oftentimes, people aren't even aware, when they give this information over, that behind the scenes they may end up being subscribed to a service they did not sign on for.

This is an issue that has been identified in this House before. Ontarians have been calling for it for years, and there certainly is a need for the government to take action to address this very serious problem. As I said, we've been aware of this for more than a decade. The problem first emerged in 2002, when the electricity market was deregulated and retailers were allowed to enter the electricity system and go door to door to promise consumers that they may pay higher rates, but they would have the stability of fixed rates. We've heard too many stories of consumers who believed that by signing a contract for fixed rates, they would in fact get lower prices. Sadly, this has almost never been the case.

By 2004, as electricity rates were skyrocketing, it was clear that something had to be done. Deregulation was abandoned, and the Regulated Price Plan or RPP was introduced to help cushion consumers from the impact of hydro rate spikes. The RPP is reviewed twice a year by the Ontario Energy Board, so that it better reflects the true cost of producing electricity. But I know that I am not the only MPP in this House who regularly gets emails from constituents who talk about how skyrocketing electricity rates are making it very difficult both to do the family budget and also to do business budgets. We just saw a report in the summer about what a serious impediment the inability to budget for electricity costs is to business growth and development in this province.

Certainly, there is widespread anxiety and fear, with real justification, that the privatization of Hydro One is only going to make this problem worse, that we're only going to see even more up and down, skyrocketing, out-of-control hydro rates that are going to really disadvantage people who are on fixed incomes and are barely able to budget for food and rent, much less try to deal with hydro rates that go all over the place from month to month. In particular, as I mentioned, the impact is very significant for businesses.

To go back to the importance of consumer protection provisions, we know that the OEB plays a very important role in monitoring the practices of the electricity retailing sector. In fact, 70% to 90% of complaint calls to the OEB concern door-to-door sales—misleading information, unethical behaviour at the door. Consumers may be signing contracts thinking that they can avoid these unpredictable spikes in rates if they sign with a retailer, but one of the things that they are not told, when they go to sign these contracts, is that, most often, the contracts are only for the cost of power. They do not protect consumers against increases in delivery, regulatory, global

adjustment or other non-energy charges. As all of us Ontarians who have ever looked at our hydro bills—we see that delivery costs form a huge component of the costs of our monthly bills.

Speaker, these practices are so significant that, on this side of the House, we believe reform won't go far enough. These predatory practices are so harmful to Ontarians that we believe they ought to be phased out completely, not just reformed. This is certainly in line with the Electricity Distributors Association, which also recommended a full phase-out of energy retailers in its 2012 report *The Power to Deliver*.

Happily, I can say that there is a mechanism in place to enable this phase-out of energy retailing, and that is the private member's bill that was introduced by my colleague the MPP for Kenora—Rainy River, called the Ending Predatory Electricity Retailing Act, 2015. That bill, Bill 111, was introduced just prior to the government's introduction of Bill 112. The goal of that private member's bill is to phase out fixed-rate electricity contracts for residential consumers, not simply introduce some of the watered-down reforms that the government has brought forward. That bill did secure the support of MPPs in this Legislature, and it is waiting at the Standing Committee on General Government for committee input. So if the government was really serious about protecting consumers, the government would move forward expeditiously to have that bill get the input that it needs and to become law in the province of Ontario.

Many of the provisions that were included in that private member's bill, the Ending Predatory Electricity Retailing Act, were also reinforced in the recent report that we received from the OEB called *Consumers Come First*. Speaker, that report was released in June 2015, just earlier this summer. That report highlighted the harms that are done to Ontarians by allowing electricity retailing in this province. Some of the findings of that report: Roughly one third of current residential and non-residential contract holders were unaware they had a contract with an electricity retailer, and 40% of those who were unaware that they had a contract were from low-income households—from households with less than \$40,000 of annual income. So low-income people are particularly vulnerable to these predatory practices.

1540

We also know from that OEB report in June that there were no instances where signing an electricity contract actually saved the consumer money. Cost savings were a primary motivation for people who did sign these contracts.

We also heard from the OEB that “almost 60% of consumers who signed contracts that require verification”—that is required if it's at the door—“change their mind and do not complete the verification process,” showing that this is not a decision that people think about and put a lot of—you know, would they compare whether they should or they shouldn't. They feel coerced into it by these heavy-handed tactics at the door from unscrupulous electricity retailers. If they have an oppor-

tunity to reflect, as I said, the majority actually change their mind and don't go through with the contract.

We also know from the OEB that \$2.6 million in fines were levied against energy retailers since 2009 for breaching the consumer protections that are already in place, or consumer protection rules that were in place prior to 2009.

We feel strongly that the energy retailing system is a mess, that the reforms proposed in Bill 112 don't go nearly far enough to protect consumers from predatory practices, and that the private electricity retailing system needs to be fully phased out.

It's like making a silk purse out of a sow's ear. You can't fix this system; you have to get rid of this system. Speaker, we believe strongly that Ontario consumers deserve that from this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I would very much like to commend the member for London West on actually addressing the content of the bill. Hers was a very well-researched address. While I don't agree with everything she said, I actually do have to commend her on talking about what's actually in the bill—well done.

If, on the one hand, the Conservatives say, “You've gone way too far,” and the NDP say, “You haven't gone far enough,” on the government side we think, “Well, we've probably gone right down the middle, and we're probably not very far from where we should be.” So with that in mind, while many of the comments that the member made were ones that in general I would agree with, she did address a couple of points.

She talked about, shouldn't we support a measure by one of her caucus colleagues to simply ban door-to-door energy retailing? There are many of us in here, including on the government side, who, if the practice of retailing energy contracts door to door were to go away completely, wouldn't shed a single tear. But in software development, there's a law of unintended consequences called regression testing, which means that if you try to solve one problem, do you in fact create another, which is, in legal terms, what came to pass when the lawyers researched what would happen if you simply banned this practice. Would it come back to affect other sectors, or would it come back in other ways that you can't intend? The fact of the matter is, yes, it would, which, while we appreciate the substance of the member for Kenora—Rainy River's proposal, is the reason that the government has put teeth in the existing act, and those teeth will actually get results.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise to offer my comments on the speech given by the member from London West.

I believe this is all a matter of trust on this type of bill. That's a difficult thing to grasp from this government—the trust part of it—when you see what's been going on for the last number of years. I'm not going to get into all

the scandals this government has been involved with. They're currently under a number of OPP investigations, as we know. However, I think when the government comes through with a bill like this—I mean, we said we certainly are going to support it but hopefully the amendments offered by the opposition will be listened to in committee, and certainly debated and added to this bill.

I want to get back to the matter of trust when the government deals with energy in this province. We've all seen our hydro bills escalate over the last number of years due to a number of things that have happened. I believe we're looking at some 40% over the last couple of years, when we get up to the first of the year, that our hydro rates have gone up. This helps these types of salespersons put pressure on those who maybe in normal circumstances wouldn't sign these types of contracts.

So while we welcome this legislation, I think—and I'll be addressing this later on—we have to certainly look at the matter of trust and what this government is trying to do. I believe they're trying to get us and the public away from thinking about the Hydro One sale and put this bill in its place, just to get the people of Ontario thinking other things right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed it is a pleasure to stand and make comments on my friend from London West and her comments.

One of the things that drove it home for me was when she said that about 80% of the Ontario Energy Board's complaints come in from people who have complaints about people coming door to door selling things. That 80% rings a bell: I think it's about 80% of the people in Ontario right now who do not favour the sell-off of Ontario Hydro.

So we're talking about protecting consumers, but how do you protect yourself from a government that, on the heels of an election where they didn't go door to door and say, "I'm going to sell Ontario Hydro," then brings in legislation that does exactly that? Now, I think there's about 58 members or something on the other side. I'm willing to bet a lot of money that not one of them went door to door in the last election and said, "Vote for me and I'll sell Ontario Hydro." I don't talk about broadening the assets; I don't talk about broadening the ownership; I don't talk about that, but actually saying, "I will sell Ontario Hydro."

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Well, I won't get into what party was talking about a hundred thousand jobs. We're talking about protecting consumers, Speaker, and I think it's very important, when we talk about that, that we have to protect ourselves from governments that would do that sort of thing.

Having said that, this is legislation that at the heart has a good intent. I think on this side of the House we will be supporting it. It doesn't go far enough. Some of us want it and some of us don't. We'd rather see Sarah Camp-

bell's bill, from Kenora–Rainy River, that said to stop it altogether. That's the consequence. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville said, "For every action there's a reaction." So if you sell Ontario Hydro you know it's going to come back and bite you at the campaign ballot box.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It is a pleasure to talk about this piece of legislation in front of us today. I too want to take a bit of a different spin than the member from Windsor–Tecumseh indicated before. At any time we can help folks in their own homes who are not in touch sometimes with the whole concept, prevent them from being taken advantage of, we should. So I want to relate a story as well.

It didn't happen to my mother, but my mother-in-law. About two years ago, somebody knocks at the door: "Just happened to be in the neighbourhood." By the way, my mother-in-law is 90 years old, in great shape. She drives and does all sorts of things, probably more than I do. But the reality is that the parging outside her house was cracked and was going to create issues. "Could I come and see what kind of damage it's already done inside the house?" So she lets this guy in the house. They go downstairs. By the way, she has been a widow for a couple of years. He says, "Look at the white stuff on those blocks; that's all mould." He writes her a contract to fix the stuff for about \$7,000.

1550

We get a call and, of course, she wants to move out because there is mould in the house. We send somebody in. There's no mould; just some white calcium from the blocks. Anyway, I phoned the guy and I said, "You need to cancel this." "Oh, no, no, you can't. It is signed, sealed and delivered."

I tried a few times and, Speaker, I don't tell people what I do for a living, in many cases. I finally came to the point and I told him who I was and that I would take this into my own hands to protect my mother-in-law. Within about two hours, I got a letter from him saying—so, anything we can do, whether it is hydro, hot water or somebody just going door to door, ripping people off, we need to put a stop to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you all. I now return to the member for London West. You have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, the member from Perth–Wellington, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh and the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for their comments on my remarks.

I think the member from Windsor–Tecumseh really hit the nail on the head. If this is a bill about protecting consumers, then we would not be looking at removing the authority of the Ontario Energy Board to determine whether the public interest is served in hydro transmission and distribution projects. The member for Perth–

Wellington also said that this bill, in some ways, is just a red herring. It is packaging up something that people feel passionately about, which is door-to-door electricity retailing, with something that is going to potentially create huge harm to the people of this province. It is going to directly undermine consumer protection, not in any way strengthen consumer protection.

We know that, as the member for Windsor–Tecumseh reminded us, 80% of Ontarians are opposed to the sale of Hydro One. They want a mechanism that would enable some careful review, some careful oversight, some public consultation and public engagement in whether that is the right decision and whether it serves the interests of the people of this province. People in Ontario have yet to see anything coming from this government to say, in any way, that this is a good deal for Ontario. Instead, what we are seeing is the removal of a mechanism that would allow that oversight.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa South and the member for Etobicoke Centre. I'm very pleased to be able to speak this afternoon to Bill 112, which is the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, which is quite a long title.

What this act actually does is it proposes legislative enhancements, amendments, to the Ontario Energy Board Act—the OEBA—and the Electricity Consumer Protection Act, the ECPA. The first thing it does is something that we've been talking about a lot, which is increasing consumer protection by amending the Electricity Consumer Protection Act to ban door-to-door sales. That will make a big difference.

It makes a number of other amendments, Speaker, around improving consumer advocacy; reinforcing the Ontario Energy Board's ability to ensure reliability and continuity of service; enhancing the OEB's ability to levy penalties for noncompliant activities; strengthening the oversight of utilities by the Ontario Energy Board; clarifying what local distribution companies can do; and finally, providing tools to cabinet to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure is built.

But I want to spend a little bit of time on enhancing consumer protection, because I know some of the members here this afternoon have talked about the sort of door-to-door and phone call scams that they've run into within the family. Certainly what I wanted to mention was the number of people who come to my constituency office. I'm sure my constituency office isn't in any way unique in the number of people who have come to constituency offices saying, "I'm at my wits' end. I've got this energy contract with some sort of energy retailer. I've tried everything I can think of to try to get out of it. I can't, and I'm stuck with it. Can you help me?"

They must have been awfully active in Guelph at one point, the energy retailers, because there was a period of maybe six months when I had a staff member who did virtually nothing else other than deal with trying to break

these energy retailers' contracts that had been sold door to door. We had things where, "Well, my girlfriend was staying with me this weekend and she signed the contract. She's not paying the rent or paying the electricity, but they've got her name on a statement and they won't let me out of it." You heard all these really quite bizarre but very real situations where people had themselves attached to these contracts that they couldn't get out of.

What we're doing with this act is doing what countless people have said we need to do. There has been amendment after amendment after amendment that just dealt with trying to clean up the process, and I think we've gotten to the point where what we're essentially saying is that if you can't fix the process, just stop it. That's what this act does. When it comes to the energy retailers, it just bans door to door.

In addition to that, because you could still have phone or mail or whatever contact, it will also extend the cooling-off period, because often in these circumstances, once people actually get the contract, read the fine print and figure out what it is they've done, they say, "Oh, no." The current cooling-off period to get out of one of these contracts is 10 days, so the other thing that this does is it actually extends the cooling-off period from 10 days to 20 days, during which a consumer who has signed one of these things can actually get out of the contract without penalty. I'm sure that there are a lot of people all over the province who will be quite relieved that this is a practice that we're ending, and that we're extending the cooling-off period when they do happen.

One of the other things that I wanted to talk about is the whole matter of transmission infrastructure, because I think the degree of control which the Ontario Energy Board has over the building of transmission lines is not widely understood. When we're talking about transmission, we're talking about those great big towers that you see that are transmitting electricity over a long distance. That's what we call transmission.

As with anything else on your hydro bill, whether it's generation or transmission or whatever, the charge actually goes to the Ontario Energy Board for approval, and what happens in some cases is that the Ontario Energy Board will look at a transmission project and say, "You know, the business case for this project really isn't very good, so we're just not going to allow this charge that you would have to put on the bill to build the transmission line that's under discussion."

1600

That sounds like good consumer protection, but the problem is, Ontario is a huge province. When you get to rural Ontario, particularly when you get to northern Ontario, there are actually instances where we build transmission lines not because there's a great business case, but because that area of the province—that rural area, that northern area—needs a new transmission line. What this act will do is give cabinet the authority to identify those priorities so that, when there's a real need for transmission to be improved in rural and northern Ontario, we will actually have the capacity to do that.

I'm going to turn this over now to my colleague from Ottawa South.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to speak to Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act.

As we've heard earlier, the summary of this legislation is that it's going to strengthen and enhance the capabilities of the Ontario Energy Board in order to further protect electricity ratepayers and also to boost consumer protection. Bill 112 proposes legislative enhancements to the Ontario Energy Board Act and the Energy Consumer Protection Act. These enhancements include:

- increasing consumer protection by amending the ECPA, including banning door-to-door sales;

- improving consumer advocacy through processes that give consumers a direct voice in OEB proceedings, including enabling cabinet to set requirements;

- reinforcing the OEB's ability to ensure reliability and continuity of service to all consumers in Ontario in the event of a failing transmitter or distributor;

- enhancing the OEB's ability to levy penalties for non-compliant activities;

- strengthening the OEB's oversight of utility transactions and structures; and

- clarifying relationships among local distribution companies and their affiliates.

As we've heard earlier, it will also provide cabinet the ability to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure can be built.

I would like to focus on the consumer protection side of this legislation for a little bit. I think we've all, as members in our offices, experienced distress calls from constituents who have been signed to a door-to-door sales contract—and you find this out many, many months down the road. As the member from London-Fanshawe mentioned, a lot of these consumers are below \$40,000 in income, and also seniors. So they're a very vulnerable population, and I believe that the amendments in this act will go a long way to protect them.

I'll say a few things about them here. The proposed Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act includes changes to the Energy Consumer Protection Act that would prohibit electricity retailers and gas marketers to sell energy retail contracts at the consumer's home, while still allowing retailers or marketers to engage in advertising activities door to door. The ministry and the OEB are also proposing to more strictly govern door-to-door marketing activity. By banning sales at consumers' homes, the proposed legislation will protect consumers from aggressive sales tactics at the doorsteps of their homes and allow for a more considered decision-making process prior to signing up for an energy contract.

There are also a number of other proposed amendments to enhance consumer protection. For example, stricter parameters are being proposed around the

contract verification. Currently, only contracts signed in person are subject to a verification process. With some of the changes in banning door-to-door sales, more and more contacts would be signed online or through other methods.

Of course, we've heard earlier that it's going to increase the cooling-off period from 10 to 20 days. I think this is an excellent measure. We've all experienced a situation where we walked away and we've been sold something or convinced of something that we know is not in our best interest. It's important that we protect people.

I do understand what the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex was saying in terms of maybe—I understood what he was saying; I'm not sure if he's right in his concerns about people buying new technology. I'm not sure that this bill would prohibit somebody from buying a thermostat, but it might put some restrictions on people buying a thermostat that came with a long-term energy contract, or having that as part of that contract.

I want to say a couple of things. First of all, I just want to note that we had some cinematic references here today. I know that the member from Oshawa and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing were quoting Yoda. I missed part of that. Also, the member from Beaches-East York was talking about Gollum and Precious. I've been struggling, trying to find a cinematic reference. The only thing I could think of was Hydrozilla. I don't know how many people who are around remember Hydrozilla from 2007. I'm waiting for the next appearance of Hydrozilla. I know we had a Trojan Horse make an appearance last spring around budget time, so I'm sure Hydrozilla is in somebody's closet somewhere and will be coming out sooner rather than later. That's all in good fun, Mr. Speaker.

I do have a concern, though, with the members of the official opposition describing the Hydro sale as a fire sale. I think it's a prudent thing to do, to invest in needed infrastructure and also to pay down some significant debt.

I don't think anybody on that side can say "fire sale" without using the number 407 in the same breath.

Mr. Grant Crack: I remember.

Mr. John Fraser: I think many of us remember. We also remember that the members on the other side were selling Hydro lock, stock and barrel. We also remember they were going to deregulate lock, stock and barrel. We also remember that they actually had a branded racing yacht—yes, a catamaran that was branded Hydro One; go back and check it out—around 2000. That was something that Hydro One had invested in. So I don't want to take any lessons from people on the other side about Hydro and our leveraging of that asset.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for giving me this time, and I yield to the member from Etobicoke Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's a pleasure to follow my colleagues the Minister of Education and the member for Ottawa South in speaking to this piece of legislation.

I'd just like to start with a brief story from my community in Etobicoke Centre. One of the things that I do on a monthly basis in the fall and in the spring is continue the tradition that my predecessor Donna Cansfield started in Etobicoke Centre, which is to hold a monthly seniors' advisory group meeting. Every meeting has a little bit of a different topic. We often bring in speakers who speak to issues that people on the advisory group would like to hear about.

One of the things that I sometimes have the opportunity to do and take the time to do is just to share with folks in the meeting the things that I'm working on as their representative. One of the things that I brought up at a recent meeting was the steps that are being planned to protect consumers particularly around door-to-door sales of energy contracts. I brought that up in the context of a list of things that our government is working on. So I was talking about infrastructure, I was talking about health care, I was talking about education—I was talking about a range of things, and when I got to this issue, everyone's heads in the room started to nod; everyone started to agree. This is something, in other words, that touches everybody; certainly, it touches a lot of seniors in my community. It touched everyone in that room, or everyone in that room could think of someone who had been touched by that. But to me, that was a vote of confidence, a sign of support around some of the measures that are in here, because this is the kind of thing that touches so many people in a negative way.

I'm actually really excited about the protection measures that are in this bill. It's the right thing to do. I think it protects people at a time when, frankly, some people are in a vulnerable position, where they're in their home and they are under pressure to make a decision. So it's the right thing to do. But I also think that it will ensure that people make more informed decisions and better decisions for themselves, and ultimately end up with the lowest possible energy rates that they can.

A couple of things that are in the bill that I think are really positive: First of all, this idea that the sale cannot be completed in the home is a powerful thing. What that does is, that incentivizes those who are pursuing marketing activities at the door to do so with the knowledge that they're going to have to come back and complete the sale at a time when the person is not feeling pressure, is not feeling urgency, is not potentially in a vulnerable position in their home, not feeling uncomfortable. I think that's a powerful thing. That will incent a lot of folks who would normally have malintent to not pursue the door-to-door sales tactic in the first place, which I think is very positive.

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That protects people from those aggressive sales tactics, so they wouldn't have to deal as often with those aggressive sales tactics as well. It allows for a more considered decision-making approach to the energy contract. Giving people time to make a decision has been proven to lead to better decision-making in virtually all circumstances. I'm currently in the market for a car, and I

have to tell you that, mainly because of my schedule, I've had to take time to make that decision. I know that, as a result, I haven't acquired the car quite as quickly as I would have liked, but the good news is that by the time I make the acquisition, I'll have made the best possible decision. I think this is a good example of how we're helping folks to make sure they take the time to make the right call.

There are also a number of other measures here to protect consumers. One is the verification process. There will be a verification process, not only for contracts that are signed in person, but contracts online or otherwise. I think that's a very positive thing. The other thing, too, is this cooling-off period that the Minister of Education spoke about. Again, it speaks to the earlier point I was making about the time it takes to make a decision. This additional time, extending the cooling-off period from 10 to 20 days and allowing people to cancel a contract without penalty, I think, is a very important and powerful tool.

Again, when the person is at the door, if there is that discussion, and the consumer is aware and the salesperson is aware, what that does is alleviate the need and the incentive to put in place pressure sales tactics. I think that's very positive as well. This legislation would allow the OEB to impose higher penalties and more flexible penalties for contraventions of its rules and regulations. Again, this is all about disincenting unscrupulous, inappropriate behaviour. I think that's all very positive.

There are a couple of other things in this bill that I'll quickly mention, in the minute or so I have left. Changing topics a little bit, continuity of service is something I have heard a lot about from my constituents. We had a power outage in Etobicoke a number of years ago that lasted for days—it touched many parts of the city. I think that people who lived through that, which was many of my constituents, are very sensitive to the impact that can have on people's lives, no matter where they are in the province.

Currently, the legislation provides the OEB with powers to ensure that continuity of service for distribution company customers would carry on in the event of an emergency. Under this new legislation, these powers would be extended to transmission companies as well. It's basically just ensuring that the protections that are currently in place get extended to transmission companies.

In a nutshell, when I think back to the people I represent, the seniors who were at that meeting I was talking about and the broader community, at the end of the day we want to make sure they can make decisions without feeling pressure and with the right information at their fingertips. Ultimately, this will lead to the lowest possible rates for those consumers and the best possible decisions and the best quality of life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I will just chime in for a few minutes here. I was listening to the inaugural

speech on Bill 112 by the Minister of Education, and it triggered my memory. She spoke about the fact that her constituency office perhaps was not unique from the rest of ours, and I would obviously disagree with that. I remember not too long ago that I was actually over in Guelph, joining parents—predominantly mothers—owners, businesspeople of daycares right across the province who had significant concerns about a piece of legislation she was bringing in. No doubt her office will probably be hearing more from Ontarians, especially residents of Guelph, about the recent fire sale of Hydro One and how that will lead to increased costs on their hydro bills.

Of course, as we talk about this act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, we should perhaps have embedded more items that would actually protect the consumer—the ratepayer—from this government itself. I can't help but think about the things she is hearing about the labour disruptions currently in our schools. We read this afternoon about how a school not too far from here, or a community just west of here, is not locking its doors. Of course, it was an initiative brought forward by their government to ensure the safety of our children in their schools: that folks who didn't have business coming into the school would have to buzz in, be properly let in. But with that labour disruption, the school doors are unlocked and anybody can come and go, perhaps, as they please.

I have young kids, and some of them may be watching today—they may be watching something else, of course—and if they are, I think that they would be concerned about this as well.

So that's my two minutes on that. I think, in fact, her constituency office is perhaps unique compared to ours.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, I'd like to go down memory lane.

I remember that when I sat on Stoney Creek council in the 1990s, we had a hydro commission; we had Stoney Creek hydro. Those were the good days. We had one of the most efficient hydro units in Ontario. In the great blackout, we were the first back online in Ontario. We had our own trucks. We had our own commission before amalgamation. That's when things started to go downhill.

After amalgamation in 2000, we had another group of people in this Legislature who, in 2002, passed deregulation of hydro. That was the next disaster that happened. We had all of these retailers popping up, all of these middlemen popping up from everywhere—Reliance, all these other guys coming out of nowhere, knocking on doors, going to our elders in Stoney Creek and irritating them, asking to look at their bills, and confusing them, depending on what age they were. It became a real horror story.

That is when it all began: back in the 1990s, when Mr. Harris decided to deregulate.

Now we are in this situation where it's going to get worse again, because now we're going to sell off what we own to make it even worse.

So we've had one bad thing after another that I've witnessed in the last few years, and it continues. It started with them, and now it's ending up with them. They're going to sell 60% of our precious Hydro.

Where are we going to end up? You can guarantee that your bills are going to go up. You heard it here, folks: Your bills are going to go up. There are going to be all kinds of middlemen appearing out of nowhere. All of these new companies are going to try to buy out the other 10-percenters. That's going to happen too, because there is nothing in the provision that says you can't buy out the other 10-percenters. All of a sudden, you're going to have—jeez, I hate this word, but I see it in my career a lot—a "monopoly." Once you get a monopoly, you're in big trouble. Trust me, we're headed that way.

I don't understand, when we've got Niagara Falls just down the street, why we pay some of the highest hydro in Canada. It's a mystery.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait plaisir de parler aujourd'hui au sujet du projet de loi 112.

I'm so happy to see this bill before us, and I hope that everybody will support it.

Let me give you my own experience—not my grandmother's, not my stepmother's. On Saturday afternoon, I answered the door, and this 6 foot 4, probably 250-pound person was telling me that he was at my door on behalf of the government of Ontario. He asked me to review my electricity bill. So I got the electricity bill. "Oh, my God, you're being tricked" or raped or whatever. "The electricity that you pay is too much. Sign here, and we'll guarantee that the cost of your electricity will go down." Of course, I knew a little bit better than to sign. But do you know what? I had a lot of difficulty to get this person out. Even though I was telling him I am a member of the government, he wouldn't take no for an answer. He was very, very aggressive. I can just imagine if my mom would have answered the door.

So we need that sooner than later. I hope it will go to committee and it will be legislated and passed to protect not just our seniors, but persons like me.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to add some comments on Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, and to add comments to the speeches from the Minister of Education, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Etobicoke South.

Certainly we've all had stories of people who have signed contracts under high pressure from door-to-door salespeople. Frankly, I have no problem with banning pretty much any door-to-door sales, because they're just too open to—in particular, for our seniors, who are maybe open to more manipulation. I don't have a problem with that. We've said we're supporting the bill.

I think the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex raised a few good points in his speech when he talked about whether maybe they’re going a little too far with the 20-day cooling-down period. This is not for door-to-door sales but just any sort of purchase. I think he’s maybe on to something and that we should get some feedback at committee from people who are in business on that, to know what maybe unintended consequences would be coming from extending this cooling period.

The other thing is banning commissions. It’s not like commissions are a terrible thing. They’re used in all kinds of business. Maybe they’re terrible when the government is handing them out for the Pan Am Games, but in many businesses, they’re a pretty normal thing—certainly, in the car business. For my brothers who are in the car business, it’s a way of motivating people in the retail business. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has had a lot of experience there. So that’s another part of this bill that I think maybe we should have some feedback on at committee, from people who might be affected by it, to sort out in greater detail whether these proposed changes put forward by the government actually make sense or not.

I’ll have to do another hit later to be able to talk about some other things.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. The member for Ottawa South can respond.

Mr. John Fraser: I’d like to thank very much the members from Kitchener–Conestoga and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the Attorney General, and the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

It’s evident that we all support the consumer protection parts of this bill. We all have heard those horror stories. The Attorney General spoke about her experience. It’s important.

I know that the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex talked about concern over retailers and perhaps we’re cramping that. I can understand that concern. I’m not sure that this bill will actually have the effect that he says it will or that he thinks it may have, but I take that point. But first and foremost, it’s important for us to protect consumers and to strengthen the OEB.

In response to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, no one can own more than 10% of Hydro One. That’s clear; that’s in the legislation. In fact, it is a monopoly right now and will continue to be.

The other point I want to make is that he referenced Niagara, and it is a great resource for us. Hydro is a complex thing. You have baseline, you have nuclear, and you have hydro that’s a bit of a baseline. But we have two peaks, so it’s a very difficult system to manage. You have to balance that system. Sometimes you have to offload hydro; sometimes you have to buy it. So it’s not as simple as turning on the tap. I’d just like to make that point.

In response to, again, the repeat of the fire sale: I want to add again that it must be difficult for them not to say “fire sale” and put the numbers “407” in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s a pleasure to speak to Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

I’d like to start off by saying this bill has some good points. I think that any time we stand in this House, we need to be thinking of the consumer always, protecting them first and foremost. But I’d really like to suggest that it would have been nice to see the bill about Hydro One be in this House, so that we could actually be protecting ratepayers by preventing continuous electricity rate hikes in the first place.

The problem is this Liberal government doesn’t want to talk about that. They don’t want, necessarily, to protect Ontarians, or they wouldn’t be going forward with the fire sale. Yet they bring in a bill like this to truly try to distract Ontarians and make them feel good that we’re doing some stuff, using the word “protect.”

At the end of the day, this government has done a horrible job over their 12 years of the whole, entire energy sector. I’m going to talk about a lot of them today, but before I start, my colleague and good friend from Windsor–Tecumseh brought a story in—my mom experienced a very similar thing, where she got a phone call from somebody trying to be a granddaughter that was in another community and that she needed to send money. We’ve all heard of people—we’ve all had them probably in our own families or at least neighbours—that have had these door-to-door high-pressure sales pitches come. We need to put that type of protection in to prevent that type of thing, but we need to be looking at the big picture in a lot of these.

I’m going to start by talking a little bit about the Hydro One fire sale. Every poll that certainly is out there shows consistently widespread opposition to the government’s sale of Hydro One. If you want to protect the consumer, step one would be to listen to the consumer and not do things that are going to put them in harm’s way. One hundred and seventy municipalities so far have passed resolutions against it. That’s one in every three municipal leaders opposing the sale of Hydro One, Mr. Speaker. It includes municipalities in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; I believe West Grey was the first of them, but there are a number jumping to the same conclusion and bringing their thoughts and concerns to me, as are the constituents in each of those municipalities, saying, “This is just wrong. Please put a stop to this bill. What can you do to make sure this does not happen?”

The shenanigans with the Hydro One sale are very akin to the shenanigans we saw and continue to see with the Green Energy Act and wind turbines. They are, again, going full steam ahead with really no thought process for the long-term ramifications. We’ve seen rates triple under this government. They’re projected to go up another 42% over the next four years, and that, Mr. Speaker, was before they even thought—well, maybe they were scheming to sell this long before, but certainly,

as a result of their overspending ways over the last 12 years, they're now trying to find ways to cover all of that and ensure that they have a revenue source.

They've had record revenues—record revenues in their whole term—and at the end of the day, they still overspent, and now they're coming back to try to take an asset that actually produces net revenues for the taxpayer of Ontario. Talk about protecting our consumers. They're going to take that in a fire sale, and it'll just be gone. Overnight, they will take that, and who knows what they'll do with the funds because we can't really know. They didn't campaign on this. I believe earlier in this conversation, the minister responsible for poverty reduction and strategy—she's also President of the Treasury Board and the Deputy Premier—used a comment, saying that she's going to tell people to "get off my porch" about this bill. I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker: There are a lot of people in my riding, next time around, who will be telling that Deputy Premier and any Liberal candidate to "get off my porch."

They did not run an election on "We will fire-sale Hydro One." At the end of the day, they did not come out and be clear with Canadians. They did not say they were going to do that, or I think we would have had quite a different, at the end of the day—I believe my colleague from Parry Sound—Muskoka used the term "unintended consequence." I believe the consumers of Ontario right now are suffering an unintended consequence, because 170 municipalities and over 180,000 people do not want this fire sale to go through.

When it comes to electricity and hydro, what everyone is waiting to hear is the Premier and her energy minister's plan to explain how they expect families, businesses and public institutions to prepare for the hydro sticker shock on their bills after they sell Hydro One.

Speaking of consumer protection: I'm going to raise the question of credibility at this point. Rates have tripled under this Liberal government, and they're expected to increase another 42% in the next three to four years. As I said earlier, that's before the fire sale and getting rid of a revenue-producing asset, which we will lose total control over if they go forward with this fire sale scheme. They're trying to do things now to cover up their 12-year spending addiction, and they're doing it on the backs, again, of the Ontario taxpayers, those people who are most challenged in our society, who do not have the ability to afford the doubling and tripling of their hydro prices, to make a choice of whether to eat or heat—

Interjection: Sneaky, sneaky.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sneaky, sneaky; I'm hearing words across the Legislature.

These are the vulnerable in our society who we need to protect. You talk about consumer protection; that's what we should be thinking in everything we do when we come in with legislation.

In my riding last year, it was huge in regard to hydro disconnects. Sixty families in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound alone had their utilities disconnected last fall because they couldn't afford these increased Liberal

rates—talk about, again, consumer protection. Had they, over their 12 years, run the energy sector properly, we would have protected all consumers because we wouldn't have the highest rates in North America, which we do today, and projected to go higher. We used to be the leader in energy rates, the lowest, which encouraged more people to set up shop in Ontario, allowed more employment, allowed more jobs, a good style of living. Now we have the highest. They're chasing companies out of our great province to the States and to our bordering provinces, and with higher rates we're going to see more and more of that. How does that equate to protecting consumers? How much more out of control will these rates get?

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Ed Clark, the consultant they hand-picked to come in and do this report on Hydro One, has not put anything in black and white. I believe that someone in here said earlier that the devil is in the details. Ontarians need to be able to see the devil in the details. What is the rationale? Has there been an actual costing, a true profit analysis, a business-case analysis to say this will protect consumers, the people of Ontario, in the long term? I don't believe so, and I very much believe that the reason we haven't seen it is that they have not done an in-depth, value-for-dollar benefit analysis. It's totally out of control, as my colleague from Elgin—Middlesex—London says, and he pays attention to this stuff very well.

He's a small business owner who has done extremely well—he and his brother and his family—over many, many years. They are the type of business that is the backbone of Ontario and the economy we could and should have, and the jobs that could be created if we had someone like him actually sitting in the Minister of Finance's chair to ensure that we are putting policies in place that are actually protecting consumers and ensuring we have the opportunity for businesses to thrive and grow in Ontario. This current government is thriving and growing business everywhere but Ontario. The only business that I believe has probably had an increase in the last 12 and a half years is moving vans to move more people, sadly, out of our great province.

Interjection: My nephew is one of them.

Mr. Bill Walker: Your nephew is one of them, absolutely. We probably all have family members who have moved out of this great province because they just don't know, and now they see this. I've had a number of people who are actually retirees saying, "I don't know how much longer I can hold on. I may actually have to leave Ontario," because of the poor job this government has done to manage our whole energy sector. Yet they bring in a piece of legislation and try to give it the nice, slick title, "consumer protection."

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Doctors are certainly a group out there that I'm hearing a lot from, as well, who are worried. Many of them are suggesting, "I'm going to leave." A lot of new doctors are telling me, person to person, "I don't know if I can stay in Ontario. My dream

was to serve the people of my community,” whether it be as a general practice physician, a specialist or an emergency room doctor, whatever they want to do. Right now, with this government, they’re all starting to double think. They’re coming out with a lot of debt and not a lot of jobs. They cut 50 teaching positions, when we have 800,000 people continually looking for a doctor, who do not have their own physician.

Factor in this fire sale of Hydro, along with the ORPP and the mess of the gas plants, Ornge, Ehealth—the boondoggles are just endless, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection: Don’t forget about the diabetes registry.

Mr. Bill Walker: The diabetes registry is another one where we spent—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I believe that you will find that standing order 23(b)(i) directs the member to focus his remarks on the subject of the bill. While we’ve granted wide latitude in his remarks, he is nowhere close to the subject of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would suggest to the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound that it’s very important to ensure that his remarks are relevant to the bill and bring his comments back to the bill. Thank you.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member from Mississauga—Streetsville standing up and trying to suggest that he can use a technical matter to bring something back, but do you know what? The reality is that he and his government truly don’t understand the impact his government’s energy policies have had on non-urban communities. I think he would do very well to listen to some of our remarks and pay attention to them, because we’re trying to build some context to their poor decision-making. When they use terminology such as “consumer protection,” it’s just a word that tries to blind over. They’re trying to distract from the real issues at hand.

He saw no problem with Ontario ratepayers paying billions in cancellation costs for gas plants that produced zero electricity: “Just the same way as when the United States committed to go to the moon, they didn’t know how much it was going to cost”—that’s our Mississauga—Streetsville MPP Bob Delaney on the Liberal gas plant scandal—all they knew was that one way or the other they were going to get there.” We can’t afford that—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I repeat the same point of order that you previously called the member on. As well, it is not the practice in this Legislature to refer to members by name, but by either their office or their riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, the member is quite right. We are endeavouring to raise the standard in here, and to ensure that we refer to each other

in respectful terms, we refer to each other by riding names or ministers’ names, not the member’s name. But I understood you were quoting from an article, if that’s correct. But at the same time, I would again ask the member to ensure that his comments are relevant to the bill and, if he wishes to talk about hydro issues, to bring it back to the bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: Of course I respect this Legislature, and certainly you, Mr. Speaker. I will suggest that I’m happy to pass this to Hansard, because I did in fact refer to Mississauga—Streetsville in my first comment, and in the quote it does say “Mississauga—Streetsville MPP Bob Delaney.” I certainly respect that.

At the end of the day, what I want to do is talk about substantive issues in here. I want to talk about protecting the consumer, and most of my remarks are trying to outline and highlight that this government has not been a steward of consumer protection. They’ve decimated this great province. They’ve killed jobs because of their handling of the energy sector particularly, and now we’re talking about a bill that is going to protect consumers in regard to door-to-door salespeople.

They talk about protecting the consumer, and yet they’ve removed the Ombudsman. They’ve removed the accountability and oversight that the people of Ontario have had basically since day one, to be able to have insight into what’s going on in any of our government agencies. And yet this government put it in a bill and has actually physically removed—the Ombudsman will not have the ability to look into Hydro One after this. How can you talk about consumer protection, and yet you remove something as significant and fundamental in principle as the person who is charged with ensuring that there’s oversight and accountability in our government, in our Legislature, in those people duly elected by the great Ontario public?

I am at times maybe wandering a little bit because I’m trying to paint the picture that I believe the people of Ontario are seeing through some of this. They’re worried about some of the things that have happened in the last 12 years, as I am, when they said, “Just trust us. Don’t worry about the details. Just take that little headline and believe us that we’re going to run the best government in Ontario.” Sadly, they have doubled our debt. It will be over \$300 billion. That’s on the backs of our children, our grandchildren and, if they keep going at the rate they are and this Hydro sale goes through, it will be on the backs of our great-great-grandchildren.

I believe my colleague from Prince Edward county suggested this morning that we are in a time now where we are probably getting very close to the precipice of going over that debt cliff. Our young people are really struggling out there. We have really big challenges to fulfill, and a lot of that goes back to our hydro sector. He’s charged with actually providing oversight in regard to the Hydro One fire sale. His fundamental goal, I think, if he was here today—and I asked him—is to protect the consumer from the mismanagement, so that they’re not going to have to pay for many, many, many years.

They've tripled the debt. Again, I think he referenced this morning in his question that our third-biggest government expenditure after health care and education is paying our debt, and yet they're going to take the Hydro One fire sale and take that revenue source out. In that mindset, how are they actually protecting the consumer?

I applaud my seatmate and colleague, who is paying intent focus on this government and the Hydro One fire sale, and I believe a fundamental principle that he will follow is protecting the consumers, the people whom he has been given the privilege to serve, as we all have in this great House.

The hydro rate increases, again, the rate fiasco caused by the Green Energy Act: Groups like chambers of commerce, including the Owen Sound and District Chamber of Commerce, are calling on the Liberals to prove that their sale of Hydro One won't cause electricity rates to rise, which in my mind, if they rise, is not protecting the consumer.

We want to see that fully costed value-for-money audit prior to the sale going forward. That's a pretty simple thing. I think, if you were buying a business or getting into business, you would want to know the reality of the situation when you're buying. I think any government with any credibility whatsoever would be prepared to stand in front of Ontarians and put that in black and white in front of the people that they're supposed to be protecting and serving, so that they know it is going to be a good deal, not just in the short term to cover some of their overspending addiction habits, but so that at the end of day, for years and years and years in the future, we are not selling an asset that is going to actually not provide protection to us from rising rates.

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These rate increases that we have seen over the last 12 years, and that we project—they've actually projected; the Liberals have projected a 42% increase, and that's without the fire sale of Hydro One—are actually going to have rate increases, and they are now starting to take a toll on our public institutions. They're forcing cuts in the classroom, hospitals and long-term-care homes. This really brings into question the integrity of this government. How can they justify selling Hydro One, a core public asset, to cover the billions that they have wasted on scandals?

How can they stand here, in good stead, and talk about protecting consumers, with the track record that they have to admit to? I know they're going to regret to admit it. I would have a challenge, too, if I had to go in front of those people who sent me to Queen's Park and say, "This is my record after the last 12 years." Scandal after scandal, three criminal investigations into the Premier's office, they've doubled the debt, the deficit is out of control, Ornge, the cuts to our hospital sector that are going on now—at the end of the day, it's a real challenge. As I say, I want to stand here today and protect families like those 60 families in Grey-Bruce whose lights and heat and hydro they allowed to be shut off—to

show, really, what's happening in this province under their watch.

They have failed in protecting the consumers and the taxpayers and, most importantly, the people, the most needy people in our society. They have failed significantly in their 12 years in government to protect the people of Ontario.

Their energy plan is one of irresponsible governance. We need to stand up and ensure that we are standing here, as the opposition—ourselves and the third party—to hold them to account, to ensure that they don't make any of the same poor choices that are, again, in fact—rather than protecting the consumers, they're bringing harm to those people, the taxpayers. Consumers, taxpayers, whatever word we want to use, there is only one group out there: The people we have been given the privilege and honour to serve.

I believe my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex talked about wind turbines. That's one that, in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, is yet again an example. I don't think anyone in my constituency would suggest that this government acted in good faith to protect the consumers by taking away the ability of the local autonomy of a council to say whether they want those forms of wind energy, or lack thereof, to be in their backyard.

I'm not certain how, if I was in their shoes, I could go door to door and suggest to people, face to face, that I protected you as a consumer by taking away that ability for local democracy, which has served us so well in every other function of government, to be put into practice. They usurped the Municipal Act for their own decision to go down a path that they ideologically believe—and still can't believe they won't step back from.

At the end of the day, our job is to serve the great people of Ontario. We need, as politicians, to be accountable. I can't believe, again, that they have stripped the authority of the Ombudsman, and the ability of the Ombudsman, to look into this. I can't believe they won't put a fully costed, black-and-white document in front of Ontarians before they do this. They want to bring in a bill to talk about consumer protection. I think, at the end of the day, when they go back out on the hustings in 2018 and they talk about consumer protection, the truth will be in the pudding then.

I think, to quote the Deputy Premier again, people are going to be saying in mass numbers, "Get off my porch. You did not protect me. In fact, you sold out this province. You sold out my kids and grandkids by the levels of debt that you have"—I'll even go to the House leader's house, with his son, who I have had the pleasure of meeting a couple of times, and try to explain to him why a certain member of his family would vote, in many cases, the way he did to do the things he did in the energy sector. I'll try to help him with that, and I'll say, "I will be pleased to help you on your porch."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise to respond to some of the remarks that were offered by the member

from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I have to say, sitting on this side of the House, it's been rather interesting listening to the debate from the official opposition because you would never guess that they were actually, when they were in government, responsible for bringing in the first process of hydro privatization. But they have, apparently, recognized the error of their ways and they recognize how important it is to maintain public assets. I think certainly all Ontarians would agree, or at least 80% of Ontarians—four out of five Ontarians recognize how important it is to keep Ontario's electricity system in public hands.

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound did make some excellent points about the lack of real consumer protections in this bill. One of our biggest concerns on this side of the House is the fact that the bill removes the ability of the OEB to assess whether an electricity transmission or distribution project is in the public interest. That is something that has been sorely lacking throughout everything that we've heard from the government about its plans to privatize Hydro One. Not once have Ontarians been given any evidence that this proposal is in the best interests of the people of this province.

That is what MPPs should be thinking about every step of the way: Everything we do should be to ensure that the interests of Ontarians are protected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Hon. David Orazietti: It's a pleasure to rise today and respond to comments from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and the bluster on the other side with regard to Hydro One and some of the related issues.

The reality is, Speaker, that the opposition has stood in the House and they have railed against Hydro One. André Marin wrote a report and talked about the mismanagement in the organization, the problems with the billing, and all kinds of other issues. Yet today, there is no better organization out there in the opposition's mind than Hydro One.

On this side of the House, Speaker, we feel that we can do better, that we can add more rigour to this organization. We can improve the way in which consumers receive services from Hydro One.

As well, there's a lot of misinformation out there, Speaker, because the opposition would like the consumers to believe that Hydro One actually sets the rates. Hydro One does no such thing and never will. That's the Ontario Energy Board. The Ontario Energy Board will have stronger powers and greater regulatory ability to provide oversight to the sector. And that will help to protect consumers. They will be setting the rates, as they have always done.

One of the things that I know consumers will be very pleased with is the banning of these high-pressure sales, the door-to-door energy contracts, both for electricity and natural gas. That's something that we have heard far too much about, certainly in our ministry, around these types of contracts, with seniors being taken advantage of and other individuals who aren't familiar with these con-

tracts. They are often roped into a long-term contract that's well above market rates, Speaker. We are pleased to be bringing that to an end.

We hope that the opposition will support the legislation because it makes good sense for consumers and good sense for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to be able to speak to An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. This bill does make some small improvements to a few minor points, such as prohibiting unscrupulous salesmen, if you would, going to the doors of consumers and talking them into signing inappropriate, improper or unfair agreements for electricity. It's good to see that happen.

Unfortunately, this bill does get carried away with things like setting the date, the time that they can advertise to talk to these people, where they can advertise, and how they can do it. A lot of time is spent talking about a little bit of improvement. So it's a lot of red tape for a little bit of protection.

Really, the problem in the energy sector isn't the fact that some salesmen knock on doors and sign contracts that aren't quite right. We have the highest cost of electricity in North America. That is just killing our industry and it's hurting our people who are on lesser incomes. They just literally can't afford the hydro bills we have in this province.

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Mismanagement of the hydro file is something that this government has done for the last 12 years. They've got the Green Energy Act with solar and wind power, which is costing us up to \$100 billion in subsidies, which is all huge money and coming from ratepayers, taxpayers—the same person always. It's going offshore. We could have got the green energy, if that's what we felt we needed, from our neighbours in Quebec at about a third or a quarter of the cost, and the money would have stayed in Canada. We would have helped our neighbour, we would have helped our citizens here and would have addressed a problem that needed to be addressed.

Now we're going to sell Hydro One and solve all of our problems for infrastructure. We get to keep the debt, we don't have Hydro One, and we don't have hydro infrastructure. So we're not going anywhere very fast.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed a pleasure, as always, to stand and refer to words spoken by my good friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who always hits the nail on the head. He reminded us that the Liberals have been in power for 12 years. There have been problems with Ontario Hydro. Their answer is, rather than fix the problem, we'll spend a lot of money fixing up the infrastructure, and then we'll disregard the \$800 million it brings us in revenue and sell it to our friends.

It's interesting, when you live in the bubble in a majority government and you breathe that rarefied air:

The spin doctors are actually pumping that air in there. So you're not listening to the real people in Ontario. When you have, out of 444 municipalities, over 170 actually passing resolutions saying, "Don't do this"—and yet, they don't listen. There is no shame in admitting to a mistake, Speaker, no shame at all, but they just aren't listening. Look, those decisions are being made and fed to you by people—Ed Clark's name was not on a ballot. Nobody voted for Ed Clark, yet he's the guy telling you guys what to do. That ain't right. It just ain't right.

You've got to think about where we're headed. Unfortunately, the member for Ottawa South was talking about Godzilla, or Hydrozilla that used to be around. I think the Liberal government, the members, when they start running for re-election, are going to face Consumerzilla. There's going to be a lot of Consumerzillas out there saying to these guys, as the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound said, "Get off my porch. Hey, pal, get off my porch. You're doing something that you didn't tell me you were going to do, and I don't want to listen to you anymore." So thank you to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his response.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To bring comment to my colleague from London West, she brought up the idea that the PCs did. I think as a government, you have to look at all angles, you have to look at all options, particularly when a government like this has run us into the debt-hole as deep as they have. But you also have to do it with strategy, with thought process, and with trust and credibility.

We did look at it as a party. I wasn't here, but we did look at it. But you know what? We listened to the people, and we actually stepped back and said, "You know what? This doesn't make sense at this time. This isn't something that we can do today." So we stepped back; we listened to the people who brought us here, and we did.

I just want, since she wants to go back to the past, to remind her a little bit of not throwing stones, because I believe there was something called the "Rae days" that weren't really great for Ontario. Sadly, we're getting very close to that again.

The Minister of Government and Consumer Services brought up André Marin. Now, there was a gentleman who actually had oversight of accountability, and he asked a lot of hard-hitting questions. Where is he today? I don't believe he was extended a contract to be able to continue to ask those questions. In fact, they went one step closer, and they cut the oversight and accountability out of the next opportunity to do that.

He talked about the setting of rates being the OEB. Well, we all agree. Nobody is trying to paint a picture of the OEB as the bad people here. If the government runs it into shambles—think of the Green Energy Act. This government put that in place, not the OEB, but the OEB was saddled with the challenge of how we do this and

keep up with those ginormous subsidies that they're giving out to many companies.

The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills is suggesting that we will support it, with amendments. Again, I think he asked a question: How well did the Green Energy Act protect consumers? Have your rates gone down as a result of the Green Energy Act or have they gone up?

My good friend from Windsor-Tecumseh talked about \$800 million being cut. What could that do for the doctors? I believe that's about the same amount that's being cut from the doctors who provide the care to all of us in this great province.

They are not listening; they need to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Today, I'm speaking on Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, 2015. Now, this bill has an interesting name. You will note the word "and" in the name of the bill. That is very crucial because this is not really one bill, it's two bills—a mini omnibus bill. The government is quite fond of these bills.

One of the bills here, the one the government would like us to pay attention to, is the "Strengthening Consumer Protection" bill. That's why it comes first in the title of the bill. The second bill is further along in the title and it has the kind of name that makes even our dedicated press gallery's eyes glaze over: the "Electricity System Oversight Act." What does that mean, Speaker? I'll tell you what it means. It means a new pipeline for the government to force through more energy projects that could drive our hydro bills even higher—which is just fantastic news for Ontario industries, on the same day they are hearing that the TPP might whack tens of thousands of jobs in our automobile sector.

What this bill calls oversight is actually the opposite: The government is weakening oversight by allowing the government to bypass the Ontario Energy Board on major transmission projects. It is the Ontario Energy Board's job to verify that all transmission projects in Ontario serve the public interest. It would certainly be inconvenient if the Ontario Energy Board were to review the privatization of Hydro One, wouldn't it? Because they would surely conclude, like more than 80% of Ontarians, that the privatization of our province's electricity transmission network is a shocking—no pun intended—betrayal of the public interest.

The OEB is required currently to review and approve private sales of transmission companies to make sure they are in the public interest. Oh, dear. No wonder we're debating the bill today.

I would like to make a constructive suggestion to this government, because the members on the other side continually tell us that privatization is necessary—absolutely necessary—to ensure that Ontarians can move around, that our roads and our bridges don't crumble, and that people can find a seat or even standing room on the bus or train to go to work. What they're telling us is that

the privatization is absolutely necessary and that, therefore, it is unquestionably in the best interest of Ontarians. What is it they call it? “Repurposing of assets”—yes, in the same way I repurpose a toonie every time I go to Tim Hortons. Or the other one: “broadening ownership.” Let’s take that one. If the government is going to, ahem, “broaden the ownership,” may I suggest that it broaden the review and oversight of its plan beyond Ed Clark and the Premier’s office.

We even have a couple of institutions that are just up for the task. One was—was—the Auditor General, but the Auditor General is having trouble finding any of the available information because the Liberal government has blocked the Auditor General from reviewing this sale. That doesn’t sound like broadening to me.

There is another one, too: our brand new Financial Accountability Officer. Oh, but wait: The government has blocked his access to documents on the sale of Hydro One, too.

But if this is such a great deal for Ontarians, shouldn’t they be keen to have someone review the finances and give an independent thumb’s-up? And if it’s not such a good deal, I guess they won’t be so keen on accountability, will they?

It’s all fine because we do have one last line of defence, the Ontario Energy Board; they’re our last line of defence. That’s an institution that should be able to review the government’s plan for Hydro One and give us an indication of whether the deal is good for Ontarians or just for our friends on Bay Street. But, oh, here we go again, Speaker: The government is trying to bundle the OEB out of play on this file, too. Under section 92 of the existing Ontario Energy Board Act, no one may construct a transmission or distribution line without OEB approval. In most cases, this requires a public hearing—a formal review. This approval under section 96 of the act must be given if the OEB believes that the project is in the public’s interest.

The public interest is defined as “the interests of the consumer with respect to prices and the reliability and quality of electricity service” in our province. This is a line of defence for the public against the ramming through of a bad, politically motivated project with long-term consequences for electricity consumers and the people who live near these projects. But Bill 112 would allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to bypass this public interest test by making an order declaring the transmission line is needed as a priority project. If such a declaration is made, Bill 112 states that the OEB “shall accept that the construction, expansion or reinforcement is needed when forming its opinion under” that situation.

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Let’s be honest here. The government already has the power it needs to initiate and champion priority transmission projects. Indeed, we have seen that it has been exercising its ample power to misguide the Ontario electricity market for years now, with inflation-busting results for hydro consumers’ bills.

There’s no reason and no need for the government to seek even more —

Hon. David Zimmer: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: In his remarks, he has accused this government of misleading this House. He said “mislead.” That’s unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Unfortunately, I didn’t hear the member say that. I suppose Hansard will record exactly what he said. I would remind the member to ensure that his language is temperate. I look forward to the rest of his presentation.

Mr. Paul Miller: The member was wrong. I said “misguide”—different word.

Anyway, there is no reason and no need for the government to seek even more power, this time bypassing the OEB, except in order to push through more politically driven but economically disastrous boondoggles.

There are some aspects of this bill which I can support; for one, no more door-to-door sales of electricity or natural gas. That’s good. This is an excellent provision. Door-to-door sales in regard to utility contracts can be predatory, and they target the most vulnerable in our community. We’ve all heard of seniors who signed terrible and expensive contracts at the door and now find themselves trapped in the system. Door-to-door marketing will still be permitted, subject to some restrictions. That’s fine with me. We shouldn’t stop business from providing information and advertising their service with ethical limits, but we should not permit them to effectively take someone’s money at the same time.

We all know what it’s like to canvass for or between elections, but imagine if we were carrying the ballot paper with us, as well, and we told people, “Why don’t you just mark an X for me now? I’ll take it to the returning officer, and everyone’s a winner.” We wouldn’t stand for it, would we? It’s completely unacceptable on many levels. It doesn’t allow the voter—or a consumer—to make an informed choice. All they’ve heard is one side of the story, with no opportunity to verify what they’ve been told or to get an objective, unbiased analysis of their situation. If we wouldn’t stand for that behaviour in politics, we certainly shouldn’t stand for it in our electricity or gas either.

Energy contracts will now be subject to a cooling-off period of 20 days, an increase of 10. This is also good.

When it comes to natural gas marketers, they will now be subject to the same regulatory standards as electricity marketers—good.

So there will be some minimum level of clarity required when outlining prices to the consumers.

But the good aspects of the bill are heavily outweighed by the bad. How timely that this new power to force projects through would coincide with the Liberal government’s privatization of Hydro One—over a century of public investment thrown to the wind, handed over at a discount price to Bay Street bankers, with the price no doubt boosted by the knowledge that if the new corporate owners really want to get a project through, this government will be able to make sure that happens for them.

The entire privatization situation stinks. The idea that this is some great investment opportunity is little short of a farce. Hydro One is one of the most profitable—if not the most profitable—assets this provincial government has. It's a guaranteed, highly profitable revenue stream that helps fund our schools and hospitals. And yet the government is saying that this sale will improve its financial position.

How exactly will that happen? They plan to invest it in new public transit infrastructure, for one. Public transit is a very worthy and necessary asset, but no one is pretending that it's highly profitable. I believe the ridership on the one they just built to the airport is at about 10%, a little short of where they'd like to be. Most profitable situations would like to be maybe 60% to turn a profit. How are they going to pay for all of those repairs and all of those conductors and people that work in the ticket sales and all of the people that work on that system, when they've got a 10% ridership? This was going to be the answer for all the people of Toronto to get to the airport so they could fly to their destinations. But apparently they're flying by the seat of their pants or in cars to get to the airport because they don't want to pay the \$19 to go to—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's \$26.

Mr. Paul Miller: —\$26, sorry, to go to the airport. I guess friends are driving them and dropping them off. So much for fixing the congestion on our streets—not happening.

A 10% ridership? Pretty poor, I'd say. You know what? It's actually prime time coming up, when people are travelling south and flying in planes to warmer destinations. We'll see if it goes up. It may go up to 15%, if they're lucky. Now, public—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Oh, there's the minister saying we'll mention the LRT.

You know what? If I had to rely on my money for a government by selling the only three things that make me money, which are Hydro, the liquor control board and Ontario Lottery and Gaming—they're my three biggies that bring in the money. So far we're selling Hydro, 60% of that. Next thing you know, we'll be selling the gambling. Next thing, we'll be selling all the other assets, the liquor control board. They'll say, "It's all to make Ontario a better place."

But it's like the private sector, because the bottom line is that US Steel came into Canada with all kinds of promises and it went to the private sector. They were going to maintain so much production. They were going to maintain so many employees—not, not, not. Then they locked out the employees at Lake Erie and in Hamilton and attacked their pension plans. That's in the courts. It's right down the street from where I'm going Thursday to see how the company is going to shaft 20,000 pensioners. That's the thing that happens in privatization. That's the thing that happens when you give it to the private sector. It's all about this. It's all about money, shareholders and profits. It's not about Ms. Thompson down the street who

got her hydro shut off because she can't afford it, or Bill the baker who, wherever he's going, can't afford to go there because he can't afford the system that he's running on.

They forget about the little people. They forget about the people who really need help. What they do is, they take care of all the bankers and they take care of their buddies in the Liberal Party. You know what? If you look at a lot of the appointments on these boards and these systems, well, you've got to wonder where they're coming from. They certainly aren't from my party. I'll put it that way.

The bottom line is that they want this province to work—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: He's going to build transit systems all over the province, we're going to be in debt the next 100 years, and he says the best part about that is they're going to balance the budget. Good luck. You're going to balance the budget? I've got to see that.

No one is pretending that the highly profitable public transit infrastructure requires government subsidy because it almost always loses money. Those three things that make money, they want to sell. So how are we going to pay for all of these things? Interesting.

It's an asset that benefits society more than government. Its broader social and economic return outweighs the cost to government, just like most other public infrastructure. But let me be crystal clear, Speaker: This government is selling assets that generate revenue in order to purchase assets that will require ongoing subsidies—not a good bet. It's a bad way to go. It's trading guaranteed income for guaranteed expense. This government would have failed Financial Planning 101.

This is a smoke screen, and it's a very dangerous smoke screen. They can make the case for investing in infrastructure but make a completely different case for their plan to sell Hydro One. There is no necessary connection. The only constraint here is the big one: They've racked up the provincial debt so high already through their mismanagement that they can't afford all the promises.

I can support this bill because I don't know where they think they're going to get the money from. But I've got a suggestion. They might have wanted to think about over \$3 billion they blew—I don't have to go through the list; we know what they are: Ornge, gas plants and all the things—

Interjection: eHealth.

Mr. Paul Miller: —eHealth, the MaRS deal, all of the things they've gone through. There will be more because the Pan Am bill hasn't come in yet. They tell me they're going to be on target and on budget. I've got to see this. This is going to be good when that comes in.

Speaker, you don't get out of debt by spending more and more, because there's more interest, more debt and it takes a heck of a lot longer to pay it off. There's no possible way that this government is going to balance the budget—they said in 2017? They'll be lucky if they

balance it—they won't be in power by 2025. That's if they put in full constraint right now to balance the budget. They may get it in 2025 if they don't spend any more money.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: They're not going to be here in 2018. What are you worrying about 2025 for?

Mr. Paul Miller: They won't be here. Whoever's there, good luck to you, because you're going to have one big debt to pay off.

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Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: Get off my porch, get off my property, get out of my town.

The bottom line is here; this is the way it's going to go, Speaker: When the bills start rolling in, there are going to be people rolling out, because I can guarantee you that all this speculation, all this rigmarole, all these broken promises about how hydro is going to bail them out—how do you bail somebody out with a one-time sale? It would be like if I sell my house, then I buy it back for more, then I sell it again and lose on it because the market went down. So I lost the first time and I lost the second time.

These guys are selling Hydro One thinking about this big influx of \$4 billion or \$5 billion. They make, I don't know, \$600 million a year off of hydro.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Eight hundred.

Mr. Paul Miller: Eight hundred. So let's see: 10 years would be \$8 billion roughly, but they're going to sell it for \$4 billion, the first time, the only time and the last time. We're down, what, \$6 billion or \$8 billion already, and then you go on for the next 50 years and you lose another few billion dollars—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Plus all the commissions.

Mr. Paul Miller: —the commissions and all the players that will get in. There will be all kinds of new friends and new companies and numbered companies. It will just go on and on and on, and we'll be in debt up to our ears for the next 100 years.

My great-great-grandson will still be paying for what these people are doing here today. It's brutal. It's a big mistake. Speaker, I've seen brutal mistakes in the past, but selling Hydro One is the worst mistake that this province and this Legislature has ever done in the history of this building.

If they attack any more of our assets, whether it's the liquor control board or lottery and gaming—if they go after that next, I'd like to ask them: Where are we going to get the tax base from? Where are we going to get the revenue from? You've sold it all to private interests. Do you think they care about paying money here? They'll get all the breaks and all the accountants will be working overtime to find out corporate breaks, so they don't have to pay the government money.

I'm telling you, I hope I'm not here when this building goes up for sale. I tell you, I hope I'm not here, because they're not going to get a heck of a lot for this seat or any of these seats. And do you know what? It will be a one-time sale, and then we'll be paying to come to work. It's

really good, Speaker. This is a disaster waiting to happen, and it's going to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm sure the Speaker will grant me the same latitude that he has granted the member. You know, Speaker, you either accept that Ontario has a strong, urgent need to begin building transit infrastructure and begin building it right now, or you don't. If you don't, you might be the member across.

If you accept that Ontario does have that strong need to get on with building infrastructure, you either have a plan to do it or you don't. If you have a plan to do it, then you've got a means of financing it or you don't. What the member has basically said is that he doesn't accept the fact that Ontario needs to get on with building transit infrastructure, particularly here in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. He has no plan to do it and no way to pay for it.

Speaker, let's look at some of the ways of financing that. You could, as the member has suggested, do nothing. This, of course, is the Conservative approach. You could jack up corporate, income and sales taxes, which is the NDP approach, or you could borrow it all, which is also the NDP approach. Or you could take apart what manifestly works well, which is always the Conservative approach. Or, if you accept the fact that we have a need, we have a plan and we're going to do something, you could find some value in what you already own in order to buy other assets that you can also own. I don't understand why it is that the member doesn't want Ontarians to share in what we already own through their pensions and through their investment portfolios. I have no trouble with that.

The member says that none of the information has been published, but Speaker, I'm just flipping through nearly 300 pages of an exhaustive document that publishes everything that the member has asked for. The member makes an allegation that there will be no oversight; is the member, for example, saying that the Ontario Securities Commission can't manage public companies like banks, railways and our largest industries? It makes no sense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of my caucus and speak to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek's comments.

I said before that this is certainly a bill that we would like to see get to committee and maybe make some changes to it, but it gets down to trust. I've said that before. We've had 12 years of this government, and then all of a sudden, we have to build infrastructure. They have racked up debt to such a—

Interjection: Record levels.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —record level that they're out of borrowing room, hence the hike, and then they start selling assets. I respectfully say, a business starting to sell assets just to keep itself going is a business that's doomed. I think that's what's happening over here.

Some of the remarks about the door-to-door salesmen certainly are valid. I've had that in my riding: calls, periodically, about not only energy salesmen but siding salesmen. Home-siding salesmen are another one that come into the riding. Last summer, we had a complaint where a couple had been duped out of about \$4,000. This is something that I think consumers need and will certainly be looking forward to.

In my comments, if I get a chance to speak later on, I'll tell you about a few examples of salespersons. I used to do that a bit. I was on the road for a couple of companies before we started our own business. Certainly, there are scrupulous salespersons and there are unscrupulous salespersons.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd welcome you on my porch.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I have never been kicked off a porch, like the member opposite—as she will probably see.

Thanks, Speaker, for this opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to stand and follow my buddy from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. He brings great passion to each and every debate, each and every question period, each and every time he appears in this House.

He talked about the smoke and mirrors when he started speaking. He started talking about “repurposing assets” and “broadening ownership,” which were the buzzwords from the campaign and the budget, but there was nothing in there that said absolutely, in black and white, “We will sell Ontario Hydro. Vote for me.” It didn't happen.

The member said he supports parts of this bill and only parts of it. That's a good thing because there are some good things in here, but they just don't go far enough. We talked about the UP Express, which I have taken back and forth. I liked it; it was pretty well empty. I didn't mind paying my \$26 or \$27—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's \$19.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's \$19 if you have a Presto card. I suppose some people—I know the member from Mississauga–Streetsville has a Presto card. I don't; I take the subway more than anything else.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Presto's on the subway, too.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I know, I know, but I don't have one; I don't have a Presto card. Most of the people flying in and out of Pearson, I would bet, don't have a Presto card, either. They're like me. If we have a staggered rate, paying \$26 or \$27—seniors get a couple of bucks off; Presto gets that down to \$19—why not give something special to the people who work at the airport and let them get on and off for \$3, the same as the subway? The price goes up on the subway, the price goes up for only the people who work at the airport. Get them using it, and then you will have some real ridership out there.

The member for Mississauga–Streetsville talked about a couple of options, but what he didn't say is, “Let's hold a referendum.” Let us hold a referendum. Ontario Hydro

was started by not one but two referendums. Let's hold another one before we sell it.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for his comments on this particular piece of legislation.

I begin by saying that leading into the election of 2014—we're not that far away from that election, one year and a bit ago. In the year and longer going back from 2014, I expect that I and my constituency office in Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and other members with constituency offices, as well, were inundated with calls and complaints and anger and anxiety over issues directly related to Hydro One. I don't think, in my 12 years as a provincial member here, I can think of a single issue that dominated as much of my staff's time out of my constituency office in Thunder Bay–Atikokan and the constituency office that I have in Atikokan as well, but to a lesser extent there. They have their own distribution company there. But in the region, I can't think of one single issue in my 12-plus years that dominated as much of our time. We spent more time trying to manage that particular file.

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I know that the members opposite are going to say, “Look, just because they messed up on the billing issue, that's not a good enough reason to go forward with the legislation as we are.” It makes the point very clearly, Speaker, that the company has had significant challenges. They will not remind people that we're going to retain 40% ownership. I know that they won't talk about the challenges that it has had in the past. Speaker, we're retaining 40%—let's remind people of that.

When I have the discussion in my community and I very clearly say to people, “What is it about this that's concerning to you?”, they always talk about the concern around rates increasing. We talk very clearly about how, while rates have always been controlled, Hydro One never controlled rates before and they won't control them going forward. The conversation comes from here down to here almost immediately.

There's a fuller story that needs to be told here, Speaker, when it comes to this legislation. Primarily, people are concerned with rates. When you remind them about the OEB piece, the conversation comes down in temperature almost immediately, I would suggest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek can reply.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the member from Perth–Wellington, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for their comments.

Speaker, I think they were throwing a word around there a few minutes ago which is really good: presto.

Presto: Our money's gone. Presto: Hydro is owned by the private sector. Presto: They say they can only own 10%. In my short career—or long career, whatever you want to call it—I've seen things called numbered companies. To try to find out who owns that 10%, you've got to hire a forensic lawyer. At the end of the story, it comes back down to the fact that that 10% they're allowed to own ends up with one company owning 30% or 40% because they've got so many numbered companies. By the time you get to them, you're not sure who owns it, but they end up owning it and they're calling the shots from maybe a different country or they're calling the shots from somewhere on Bay Street in a secret office you don't know about. The next thing you know, the 60% that's not owned by us—and they say that you have to have 40% to control it. That's not how it's going to work.

Trust me, Speaker. The private sector doesn't work that way. They're experts at finding loopholes. They're experts at finding angles. They're expert at numbered companies. They're experts at finding a way around the system. That's why we have judges, courts and laws, because half the time we're spending most of our time—and hundreds of millions of dollars in court—trying to find these guys.

Do you remember certain guys like Bernie Madoff? He operated for a few years. Who was that other guy? Lord—

Mr. Bill Walker: Lord Black.

Mr. Paul Miller: Lord Black. There's another beauty.

Now we've got Mr. Mazza, who worked for them. He was scamming them. Mazza was scamming them and they didn't even know it until we pointed it out.

So when you say, "Trust me. We own 40% and we've got control," that's a load of malarkey.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on this bill. I would like to advise the chamber that I will be sharing my time. Je vais partager mon temps aujourd'hui avec le député d'Ajax–Pickering, la députée de York South–Weston et puis le député de Sudbury.

This has been a fascinating discussion for me. As a new member, I'm always intrigued by how the different parties view different pieces of legislation and different points that we bring forward.

The one thing that I want to reinforce, as was stated so eloquently by the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, is that this is a very serious problem. Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, is extremely serious. We need to do everything that we can to protect consumers in our communities.

I do have my own personal story about retailers who have come to the door and tried to make sales. It was very similar to what the Attorney General brought forward about the fellow who came to her door. This guy came forward and he wanted to know if he could talk to us about the electricity contract that we had. We said, "No, thanks. We're not interested." The next question

was, "Can I see your bill?" There was also an implication that this fellow worked for the Ontario government.

I've worked in a constituency office now for eight years: seven years on the federal side, one year as a representative. The one thing that I know is a very serious problem is what happens when elders, vulnerable people, are at the door, and people come sounding officious, looking official; they're wearing badges, identification. They feel intimidated. This bill will go a long ways towards repairing that.

I do also find it interesting that my colleague from Ottawa South brings up a similar concern, because he has also worked in a constituency office, and those are the places where we do hear about the problems that our constituents face. That very close, intimate relationship with our communities lets us know what we need to be working on, and I know that this has been an extremely serious problem.

The other thing that I find very interesting about some of the conversation that happens in this chamber is that each of the parties is obviously entrusted with bringing forward their own points of view about things. I need to go back to the name of the bill: Strengthening Consumer Protection. That's what we're here about, and we need to not get away from that fact. As much as we all try to pull in some little political angle here or there, we are here to protect the constituents in our ridings. We need to not lose sight of that.

Just in committee today, discussing Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities—that act has been central to improving the health of Ontarians, and yet when you sit in committee, you're almost accused of being some kind of a criminal. We need to make sure that when we come together in this chamber, we are discussing real issues that affect real Ontarians at their doorstep every single day. To suggest that we're absolutely not listening to the people of Ontario—I'm sorry, but that's not quite right.

I'm very pleased that we have brought forward this legislation. I'm delighted to speak to it, and I look forward to hearing some of the other comments today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a privilege to stand and speak on Bill 112, Strengthening Consumer Protection. Some of the terms I just have to get used to. The OEB, of course, is the Ontario Energy Board. The Ontario Energy Board Act is OEBA. We'll use those short versions. The Energy Consumer Protection Act is the ECPA. And on it goes.

It's quite interesting. I think all of our offices from all parties have been faced with queries at the front desk, where people come and they have challenges where somebody has knocked at their door, sold them a bill of goods—almost fraudulent—and gone on and taken whatever money they could. Sometimes they've installed a product, albeit inferior; sometimes they've installed a product and they were happy with it. Little did the

consumer realize that it was double the price they should have really paid.

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I just know that, from my office, there's a couple of ladies who bought something at their house—unbelievable. These people give their heart and soul every day to helping people, and somebody comes along and cons them, gives them a scam, and that's it. One of them was stuck with an air conditioner, and this dear soul's husband is a jail guard. I would never want to challenge him. He would probably pick me up and throw me up in the air. They got scammed.

Another lady of mine got a deck. The gentleman at the front counter never had a penny—I realize it wasn't an electric deck, but it was a deck. Her husband looked out the door in the evening and he's got an International cab-over truck, which I can tell you is probably worth \$110,000—a very poor contractor who was supposed to have an old, beat-up pickup truck and didn't have it.

Bill 112 does a lot of things. It improves the consumer advocacy through processes that give customers a direct voice in OEB proceedings. That includes enabling the cabinet to set requirements. That gives us the authority and the power to do what should be done to protect our taxpayers. I'm thinking back—and a lot of you here from all parties will remember: We tried to review this once before and we did make serious changes. Quite frankly, it wasn't enough. It should have been more, and this is the opportunity to do it. Let's put the protection clauses in place for our residents. This is to ensure the reliability and continuing service to customers.

The OEB's ability to levy penalties is major. Strengthening the OEB's oversight of utility transactions and structures is imperative. And it goes on: clarifying relationships among local distribution companies and their affiliates.

You can just look at solar as an example. Fortunately, when we put it in one of our locations, my wife had the foresight to go and check with the ministry if there were available transmission lines on the grid. There were, and we acquired—sorry, we borrowed money to buy the solar. I just want to make sure that everybody knows I didn't have the money to pay for it. All the others that she talked to—terrible. The transmission lines had just been dilapidated and not kept up. That was very unfortunate, because there you have customers paying money, can't get hooked into the grid, and the service is going out the door.

I'm not too sure how much time you want me to—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: You've got another minute.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I've got another minute? Okay, thank you.

Now, once they got finished with that grid, it was—without my wife helping a number of people, they would have been in serious trouble.

Some of the things I'd like to mention: This is going to enhance protection for consumers who sign energy retail contracts. It's going to double the cooling-off period from 10 days back to 20 days. It's going to ban

door-to-door sales of retail electricity and gas contracts. That's what we want. Maybe if we get that done, we can go on in future bills and provide other safeguards for our residents who are being taken for "a ride," because, Lord knows, we should be doing that for them. It's unfair.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise and to speak to Bill 112 this afternoon, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity Systems Oversight Act.

Many other members have spoken about their personal stories—I do have one to add—with energy retailers that come to the door. Many of them have also come to my door. One, in particular, came to the door in the evening hours, dressed in construction boots and overalls and a sports jacket that clearly had the word "Ontario" on it, really big, on the back and the front. They came to the door and said, "Hello, can I see your furnace?" I said, "I'm sorry, who do you work for?"

He said, "I work for the Ontario government."

I said, "Really? Which ministry, which agency?"

He went on to say that he worked for an organization that was there to tell me that the government was giving rebates. He was ready to work. He was a salesperson, but disguised as a worker, ready to do the work and the job at that hour of the night.

Obviously, I did not let him in, but I think of all the constituents—many have come to my office, and other members have recounted the same story, asking for help after having signed something at the door. If you think of elderly people, if you think of people whose first language is not English, it's hard to say no, especially if someone says, "I'm from the government." Sometimes they're convinced that they are getting a better deal than the one they currently have, so they are eager to sign. Then, only after showing it to their kids or to a neighbour do they realize that it isn't a good deal at all. So I'm really pleased to see that door-to-door sales will be banned with the passing of this bill.

Another thing I wanted to mention is that this bill not only aims at boosting consumer protection and improving the ability to ensure continuity of service of electricity, but also builds on the oversight that the Ontario Energy Board has. As we all know, the Ontario Energy Board functions as a quasi-judicial tribunal to protect the interests of consumers with respect to prices and the reliability and quality of service. It is the province's independent regulator. It regulates over 70 LDCs and five transmitters across the province, and in the natural gas sector, it regulates three different distributors.

I think the fact that we are strengthening the OEB's capacity of oversight, and to function as the province's regulator, is something that is needed, especially as we move forward with the changes the province is making.

Mr. Speaker, I think my time is up, and I will now pass the baton over to my colleague the MPP from Sudbury.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to thank my friends from my party for speaking to this bill before me. I am

very pleased to be able to rise and speak to Bill 112, the Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act. I think it is very important that we speak to this and talk about how quickly this is needed for our province. I know that many individuals have already spoken about some stories that have happened in their riding, and I think I would be remiss if I didn't also address how this is happening in northern Ontario.

Many individuals would come to my constituency office and talk about some of the tactics that were being used by many of these companies, mumbling the word in front of "gas." So they weren't sure if these salespeople were from a legitimate gas company or the one that was already providing, and them providing their bills—and feeling intimidated to sign these contracts, and then not sure how much time they had to try to alleviate the contract, and calling and finding out that the contract needed some work to get cancelled.

I think that one of the important things to recognize about this specific bill—I know we have talked about many of the enhancements that are coming forward with this bill. I think it is important to emphasize that this bill is going to enhance protection for consumers who sign energy retail contracts by doubling the cooling-off period to 20 days from 10 days and requiring that all contracts are subject to a very important verification process.

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Another thing that I think is important to bring forward is that once this bill is enacted, once we can get this bill in place, this legislation will enable the government to do something that consumers have been requesting for some time now. They've been asking for us to ensure that we ban door-to-door sales of retail electricity and gas contracts. I think that is something important for us to bring forward.

As I know my time is slowly ticking away, I think it's important that we also look at one other aspect that was touched on earlier, I believe, by the Minister of Education and by the Deputy Premier. We're also talking about allowing cabinet to have the opportunity to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure is built. That is key.

I'd like to take you down memory lane for just a brief moment, Mr. Speaker. If we go back to August 2003, there was a tiny squirrel walking along a line. Do you know what happened to that squirrel? He fell off that line into the transmitter—boom, a blackout right across Ontario. Do you know how that happened? The PC government of the day did not invest in infrastructure or electricity at all and left our electricity grid to be destroyed by a squirrel.

It has been this government, since we've taken over, that has invested in the electricity grid, to make sure that those of us in northern Ontario have the transmission lines that are now being built. We can continue to move forward, Mr. Speaker, and make sure, with this bill, that those who need it in First Nations groups actually have the opportunity.

I hope you give me some leeway like you've given others.

They've been talking about Hydro One and the fire sale. I'd ask them to look at what "fire sale" actually means. Look it up in the dictionary. Do you know what it says? "Look at what the PC government did when they sold the 407." That is a fire sale, Mr. Speaker.

When we are looking at what we're doing with this government, we are doing the heavy lifting. We are making the tough decisions. We are very happy right now to ensure that we continue to build Ontario up.

I just made announcements in my riding of Sudbury—\$69 million in investments for northern Ontario highways.

Interjection: Infrastructure.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: That is infrastructure. That is what we are doing. That's what the people of Ontario want. That is what the people of Ontario need.

I am thrilled to be part of a government that makes sure that we look at the importance—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I thought we were debating the bill, not doing cabinet auditions here this afternoon. I wonder if the member can come back to the point at hand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Well, I return to the member for Sudbury. He still has a few seconds.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Perfect. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to be able to stand up here and not audition for anything, except to speak on behalf of the people of Sudbury and all of Ontario for a government that is doing the right thing. I know that's hurtful for my friends on the other side.

This government is stepping forward, building Ontario up, and I am happy and proud to be part of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions or comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: That was very entertaining, to say the least.

One of my colleagues mentioned that at least we're making a little bit of progress because at least they're admitting that it's a fire sale, and at least they're actually trying to do a sale instead of two giveaways, like the power plants that we had before, which cost us billions and billions of dollars.

Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, it is the taxpayer who's paying the freight on all of these deals.

It's consumer protection that we're supposed to be talking about today. It's a shame that there wasn't some consumer protection when a lot of these members went to the doors, on those porches that we've been talking about this afternoon, and actually told people, "We are going to sell Hydro One." I don't believe I read any of their materials that suggested there was going to be a fire sale

of Hydro One. When you're talking consumer protection, we'd really like to see you walk the talk.

I also want to chat a little bit about the Minister of Natural Resources. I have a lot of time and a lot of regard—but he was saying in his comments that there would be no increases as a result of this. They're trying to spin this so that it's the OEB that makes the increases. We get all of that, but at the end of the day, if there are increases, it doesn't matter whether it's the government or the OEB that actually signs off on the piece of paper.

I want to remind people, particularly the business people out there that know this, that the cost of the global adjustment increases as a result of the Green Energy Act. I can tell you, in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Chapman's Ice Cream has a very significant global adjustment. It is very challenging to run a business like that in today's world as a result of these great deals that this government has been signing.

So we do need to protect the consumer. We do need to ensure that there are accountabilities in place. At the end of the day, we need to ensure that the government is listening to the people of Ontario so that they truly are protected and we're not selling them down the road and putting us in even more debt that their Liberal 12 years have proven.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Several of the members on the government side spoke to this legislation this afternoon. Many have shared personal stories about how constituents have been harmed by energy—electricity—retailers' unethical and aggressive sales tactics. I think that it's great that the government is listening to constituents and wants to take action to address their concerns. My question is: Why are they not listening to the 80% of Ontarians who don't want the sale of Hydro One to go through? Why are they not listening to the 170 municipalities that have passed municipal resolutions to stop this sale? Instead, we have the member from Sudbury actually quite proud of the fact that this legislation removes OEB oversight from critical or priority transmission projects, just like one would categorize the sale of Hydro One.

In fact, we are very concerned that this legislation is not about protecting consumers. This legislation is about helping the government move forward without—removing any impediments from its planned sale to privatize Hydro One that is opposed by people throughout this province. In fact, if the government was serious about consumer protection, they would look at the private member's bill that has already been debated, that has already been passed, that is waiting at committee to be addressed by Ontarians. That's what they would do to end predatory practices in the electricity retailing sector and actually do something to protect consumers instead of this packaged bill that gives on the one hand and takes away hugely on the other.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: It's a real pleasure to stand and return the conversation a little bit to the comments made by my colleagues on this side of the House during their 20-minute session this afternoon.

Of course, they have been emphasizing the most important part of this bill, which is strengthening consumer protection. Of course, this has been a top priority for our government. We introduced the Energy Consumer Protection Act in 2010, and since that time, we have seen some improvements; there are far fewer complaints against retailers in the gas and electricity area. Of course, this bill is now going to take things a step further.

With banning door-to-door sales, as we've already heard, this is a very important step forward. We've all heard the stories, especially in relation to seniors. When people knock at their door, sometimes they are very trusting and maybe a little bit lonely, so they invite people in. They can sign up for things that they really didn't intend to at all. So not only have we banned the door-to-door sales of retail and electricity gas contracts, but we're also giving the opportunity to consumers who sign energy retail contracts to have a cooling-off period, that we've, in fact, doubled from a period of 10 days to 20 days. So I think this is very important.

There was a great deal of consultation in terms of the development of this bill. The Minister of Energy hosted focus groups, elicited input from online workbooks and surveyed current and former energy contract holders and non-contract holders. This was a very thorough type of consultation process, and clearly, this bill is incorporating all these ideas and will protect consumers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to add comment to the debate put on by the government. It's unfortunate that the member from Sudbury resorted to polemics instead of talking about the issue at hand. You would think that he would stick to the bill, given the fact that this government is painting all the salespeople in this province with one brush. I think that's unfortunate. There are the bad eggs out there; my office has heard the bad stories going on, of people being take advantage of. However, to paint an entire profession or group of people, some of them for whom the only way of making money is selling door to door, with one brush I think is foolish and ridiculous for this government to do.

It's just what they're doing to the doctors. They're painting the doctors as all these money-grubbing professionals who get paid too much. This government is stepping forward and taking people down the direction of the fact that they're saying the doctors pocket the entire amount of billings they receive from OHIP, when, in fact, we know that it goes to pay for rent, pay for staff, pay for their eHealth. It goes forward and pays for the family health teams to hire other staff.

For this government to paint salespeople with one brush, that they're all bad people—I guess they're taking a page from how they're painting health professionals with one brush. It's unfortunate that they have to head

down this time and time again. This government, time and time again, comes out with, “We’re helping out Ontarians,” with these bills they bring forth. I do have to say—I’m going to quote Ronald Reagan here—the nine scariest words you can hear in the English language are, “I’m from the government and I’m here to help.” Stop helping the people of Ontario, please.

Mr. Bill Walker: Get off my porch.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Get off my porch. I’m sure you’re going to hear that in the next election. I’m so thankful that two and half years from now we’ll be at the polls so we can get rid of this government, we can bring Ontario back to the forefront, we can reinstate better hydro prices. Thank goodness for the people of Ontario. This day is finishing because we’ve had enough. We’ve had enough—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—sorry. Again, my mistake; I apologize. He’s already had his chance. I misread my notes; sorry.

I return to the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: No problem, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I would like to thank my friends, the honourable member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—I found out that Chapman’s Ice Cream is in his riding, so I’m looking forward to the day that we have a Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound day on the hill here at Queen’s Park—the honourable member for London West, the Minister of Community and Social Services and my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

I’m going to speak specifically to the comments made by my friend across the way from Elgin–Middlesex–London, which really reiterates the point to me that they should read the bill, because he’s talking about how we’re clumping them all into one group.

Let me quote some points here, Mr. Speaker. Some of the important findings from a report by the Ontario Energy Board that helped us draft this legislation talk about the need for better energy literacy for consumers; consumers were unhappy with their experiences with aggressive door-to-door sales practices. Energy retailers can still play a productive role in Ontario’s energy sector, as they provide consumers with choices about who provides their electricity or natural gas. They offer choice to a segment of consumers who either want fixed rates or are seeking to purchase renewable or carbon-offset energy. They can also offer products in conjunction with the fixed-rate electricity contract that can help households conserve energy, like dynamic thermostats.

You know what? There are a lot of positive things that are coming out from this bill. We will make sure that we protect our consumers in this great province of ours. We will ensure that we do this while we do the heavy lifting on all of the other bills and other projects that we’re putting forward. With that, I know my time is up and I’d like to thank everyone once again for their comments.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being very close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora-Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham-Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East-Cooksville / Mississauga-Est-Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity-Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Attorney General / Procureure générale
		Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
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
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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 Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Whitby–Oshawa	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Clerk / Greffier: Vacant

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment / Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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