



No. 127A

Nº 127A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 30 November 2015

Lundi 30 novembre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 416-325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 416-325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 novembre 2015

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Most folks know that the Ontario Lung Association is in the House. What they may not also know is that at tonight's reception, Tom Paterson of Junction Brewery is going to be hosting a beer-tasting. Please come out and say yay to Junction Brewery.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to introduce today, in the legislative gallery, Bev Black of St. Catharines, who is here with the lung association.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's my pleasure to welcome the president of ACORN Canada, Marva Burnett, and the ACORN representatives who will be joining us here today. As you know, Speaker, ACORN is the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my distinct pleasure to welcome my friends Mr. and Mrs. Zamani, who are visiting the House today. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: On behalf of my colleague the MPP for Windsor West, I'd like to welcome and point out that legislative page Prasanna Mohile is our page captain today, and I'd like to introduce his proud family members who will be joining us: his dad, Sanjay Mohile; his mom, Arundhati; sister Prachi; aunt Rupa Haldavnekar; and grandma Madhuri Mohile. Welcome to you all. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Today marks the end of Lung Month, a month when we celebrate everything to do with breathing. To close off Lung Month, the Ontario Lung Association is here and I'd also like to welcome them. They are hosting a reception tonight, and you're all invited to come celebrate in rooms 228/230. They're also here meeting with MPPs and staff about how we can better protect Ontarians' lung health. Please join me, once again, in welcoming the Ontario Lung Association, their lung ambassadors and volunteers from across Ontario.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, I would like to congratulate our page captain today, Keana Cavero. We welcome her mother, Yanet Cavero, her father, Larry Cavero, her sister Naliani Cavero, cousin Lianna Lopez and her godmother Vanessa Lopez. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We're going to be joined, very shortly, by the grade 5 class from St. Marguerite d'You-

ville public school, from my great riding of Oak Ridges—Markham. They will be joined by Zoe Vacilotto, a student, who is the daughter of Maria Papadopoulos, who worked here at Queen's Park for many years.

Mme France Gélinas: We have some visitors from the Association of Ontario Midwives with us today. This is Liza and Steve van de Hoef, as well as Heather Harding. They are here for the campaign to end mandatory newborn eye prophylaxis. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I wish to introduce two members of Parliament from the regional assembly of the Azores visiting us from Portugal today: Duarte Freitas and José Andrade, accompanied by Paula Medeiros from the Portuguese consulate in Toronto. I want to wish them a warm welcome here to Queen's Park. Bem-vindos.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to introduce Scott Hickey, vice-president of corporate communications and public affairs for Dynacare. It's nice to see you here.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to welcome Michael Vorobej, who has come in today to give support to my tipping bill, which is having hearings this afternoons. Thanks, and welcome.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to take this opportunity as well to welcome the Ontario Lung Association and, specifically, Kati Wallace, who is a constituent of mine from St. Paul's.

Of course, I'd also like to welcome the delegation here from the Association of Ontario Midwives.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I just wanted to congratulate Rob Jamieson, the new president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association—actually from Barrie. He's not here today, but I know he's with us in spirit. Congratulations on that new endeavour.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to congratulate the Ottawa Redblacks on a formidable season. They have only been a CFL team for the past two years and they made it all the way to the Grey Cup last night, in a heartbreaking loss in the last five minutes. We were that close, not only to being the greatest province in football, but definitely Ottawa, we can say, is the greatest city for football in this entire province. I know that I join members of all parties from across Ontario in saying thank you to the Redblacks for an excellent season.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. Last Thursday's fall economic statement just

goes to show that there is no reason that Ontarians should trust this government's numbers.

The government took a billion dollars from the reserves and another \$1.1 billion from the sale of Hydro One. The deficit is actually \$2.1 billion higher than this government is willing to admit.

As the Toronto Star's Martin Regg Cohn said, the government under-promises and tries to claim they over-perform. He said that Ontario "is a chronic under-performer, and the government is an ongoing overspender."

Mr. Speaker, will the government finally admit that they have no plan, and no realistic expectation to balance their budget in 2018?

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, our plan is fundamentally different from their plan, although I must say that I'm not even sure that there is a plan.

Year after year, we have beaten our deficit—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll be looking to both sides to start quiet.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have beaten our deficit targets year over year. We will continue to do so.

We have been very clear that net revenues from asset sales like the Hydro One IPO are being placed in the Trillium Trust. In fact, last spring, we proposed an amendment to the 2015 budget, in committee, that would formalize that all net proceeds would be contributed to the Trillium Trust. Do you know what happened? Both the PCs and the NDP voted against it, which is why it's in this fall—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: I've got some unfortunate news for the Acting Premier: You can't spend the same money twice.

The fall economic statement confirmed what the opposition has been saying all along: The sale of Hydro One was not for infrastructure. We've known all along that the Liberals used this money to simply pay for their own scandal, waste and mismanagement. Some \$1.1 billion from the sale of Hydro One went straight into general revenue. Oddly enough, that's exactly the same amount the Liberals wasted on the gas plant scandal.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the government just come clean? The only reason they sold Hydro One was to make up for their own incompetence and waste. Come clean and admit that's what you did.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's really important to also point out that the contingency fund remains what it was. This notion that we somehow used the contingency fund to bring down the deficit is simply untrue. I would love to see the evidence you have that would demonstrate that that has been a change.

We are committed to spending more on infrastructure. This is a clear direction this government is going in. We have a plan to get there. The plan does include asset sales; it includes broadening the ownership of Hydro One, because that's what the people of this province elected us to do. We are moving forward on our mandate to build Ontario up.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: The government's numbers just don't make sense. The Acting Premier, everyone understands this is a shell game.

Over the next three years, the government is predicting \$8 billion more in revenue than the Financial Accountability Officer has forecasted. I know who I trust. I trust the independent officer, not the government spin machine. The gap is real, and the fall economic statement clearly says that the Hydro One revenue will be used to fill the gap, an \$8-billion gap. They expect to get \$9 billion from the sale of Hydro One. I hardly think this is a coincidence. We all know what's happening here.

Will the government admit that they are using the next portion of the Hydro One sale to plug their \$8-billion gap? Tell us the answer, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have—
Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have non-tax revenue from capital gains, on assets and otherwise. That's reflected as such, and we made it very clear that we're dedicating every dollar that is the net result of these assets to the Trillium Trust.

Furthermore, we have over \$120 billion in revenue. We are not relying on assets to manage the deficit; we're relying on economic growth. That's why we're reinvesting the money: to create even more wealth for the people of Ontario.

The member opposite is actually double-counting when he talks about reserves, Mr. Speaker. I think they need to get their act together, in terms of the principles of accounting, on this very issue.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Treasury Board president. Last week, the finance minister robbed the sale of Hydro One, intended for infrastructure monies, to pay down the deficit. Unfortunately, that type of creative financing is unsustainable and, I dare say, dishonest. Don't just take my word for it; take the—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Certainly. Withdrawn, Speaker.

Don't just take my word for it; take the Financial Accountability Officer's. It means that the Treasury Board president should be following the mandate letter assigned to her to reduce the size and cost of government, but that's barely mentioned in the fall economic statement.

Why? Is it because the President of the Treasury Board has failed to hold the line on government spending?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In fact, earlier this month, the Financial Accountability Officer affirmed our lowered 2015-16 deficit target of \$8.5 billion without factoring the Hydro One IPO into his figures. We at the Treasury Board are working very hard to keep program spending low. We have to make sure that we're getting the best value for every dollar we are spending.

What's fascinating to me is that what we are hearing from the opposition over and over again is, "Spend more." You want us to increase compensation to physicians, you want us to—every day we hear about expenditures you want us to make. Yet, now we're hearing that we're spending too much.

The fact is that the Treasury Board is going through a line-by-line review of every ministry—every program in every ministry—to ensure that we're getting the best value for those dollars.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Financial Accountability Officer actually said we were going through short-term gain for long-term pain. That's what he said. I remember seeing it. You yourself said on W5, "We're out of money."

Now, Ontarians can't afford any new taxes, so the only hope, in order for this government to balance the budget and ensure sustainable health care and education, is through a more efficient government and for you to actually do your job. But that's impossible when the government takes its so-called net zeros in contract negotiations and applies that money to higher salaries rather than to the deficit. There is no discipline on that side of the House.

Will the Treasury Board president explain why her department has lost control of government spending and is not doing its job?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is simply wrong. In fact, we are looking at an average 0.9% increase in spending. That is significantly below the rate of inflation. I don't know where the member opposite would want to cut more. As I've said, every day we hear that they want us to spend more on their particular projects.

We have a very clear path to balance. We are on that path. We are making difficult decisions, but we are determined to achieve balance by 2017-18. It will take a variety of approaches to get us there, but we are committed to doing exactly that, while we protect the services that matter to the people of this province.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They're clearly not protecting the services that matter the most to Ontarians. Look at the illegal strikes in education; look at the health care cuts that my caucus has been raising in this assembly.

If you want to talk about who is wrong, I want to know if you were right or if you were misquoted on W5 when you said, "We're out of money." You can't have it

both ways. Your inaction and your lack of discipline speak for themselves. It is not leadership; it is reckless. This government has specialized in mediocrity. You have compromised the province's credit rating and made life unaffordable for Ontarians, and you have only yourself to blame. The budget will not balance itself.

Will the Treasury Board president admit here today in this place that lack of discipline in her department and across government is what really is in store for Ontarians in the next number of years?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think this is a question that maybe should go down in history as taking two paths in one question. You've got to choose a lane. On one hand, you're saying, "You're spending too much," and on the other—the very same question—you're saying, "You're not spending enough."

I really do think that the party opposite needs to get their act together. There was a time when we knew exactly where they stood, and that was slash and burn, fire 100,000 people. We're hearing about a kinder, gentler party, Speaker, but at the core, there is nothing that has changed over there.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Page 100 of the fall economic statement shows that the money from the Hydro One sell-off is going toward government revenue, but the Premier promised that selling off Hydro One would build transit and infrastructure.

1050

Of course, we know that the selling of Hydro One was never about building anything. The Liberals have counted the money once for transit in the Trillium Trust, and a second time against the deficit. Speaker, ask any Ontarian and they'll tell you that you can't spend the same dollar twice. You can only spend a dollar once.

Can the Acting Premier explain how the Liberals are taking a dollar and counting it twice?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let me explain that we have capital gains on assets and we have a number of initiatives that happen throughout the budget cycle. Over \$124 billion in revenue occurs. In this particular case, you have an asset that creates a gain. We have to reflect it as non-taxable revenue. We have also put in place a dedicated Trillium Trust that ensures that the value—the net gain—is invested into that trust to be reinvested into new assets, Mr. Speaker.

We are not relying on assets in order to manage our deficit. What we are doing is growing our economy and enabling us to add more revenue, more activity, and we are controlling our spending. We are the leanest government in all of Canada because of the efforts that we are

taking and that the president of this Treasury Board has been enacting all this time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government's own fiscal update says the increase in revenue "largely reflects the ... recent Hydro One IPO." The money from the sell-off of Hydro One isn't going toward building transit and infrastructure. It's going to actually balance the books for one year. The sell-off of Hydro One isn't raising the money the Liberals promised. It's not building infrastructure that they promised to the people of Ontario.

Will the Acting Premier and her government be breaking the promise they made to Ontarians to build transit just so they can balance the budget, Speaker?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We've just enacted further regulation around the Trillium Trust in order to ensure that the lands from Seaton and Lakeview, and head office buildings that are also not as productive—that we look at initiating those gains to be invested into the Trillium Trust. We stipulated it very clearly into the act. That is exactly what's happening. Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite may want to talk about the fact that she doesn't like the notion of us taking an agency or a company that is underperforming, making it better, creating greater value, netting tremendous gains for the province of Ontario and dedicating its gain into the Trillium Trust for reinvestment into our economy. That is her choice, but we are going to continue to invest in our economy, to grow our economy, and enable us to have greater revenues overall and greater productivity and prosperity for all people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals promised that the Hydro One money would go into the Trillium Trust to pay for infrastructure. Instead, it's going into general revenue so that the Liberals can show a one-time smaller deficit in this year.

Will this Acting Premier finally admit that selling Hydro One was never about infrastructure? And can she tell us which of the transit projects that the Liberals list off continually in this House she will be cancelling in order to balance the budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have stipulated that we're going to be spending over \$134 billion in infrastructure. We have identified in the fall economic statement a number of projects that are well under way. Over 200 more projects have occurred. This transaction also enabled us to pay down debt by \$1 billion.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are acting prudently, we are taking assets, making certain that we're able to achieve greater value of those assets, and reinvesting. Of course, you have to recognize that gain as a non-taxable revenue. It's exactly what we've done in this budget. We've been very upfront throughout and going forward.

We are going to continue doing everything that's necessary to invest in our economy, to create even more value. That is what we are doing.

Mr. Speaker, let me say it again: We're not relying on assets to control our deficit. We are relying on the \$124 billion of other revenue that is generating wealth for the province of Ontario.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. On the very first page of the fall economic update, it says that if revenue growth is slower than expected, "the government will need to consider other tools." Does "other tools" included further sales of revenue-generating assets and even deeper cuts to health care and education?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's prudent, of course, for us to take consideration of all the tools that are available to the province and to a government, and frankly, Ontario has a lot of flexibility. We have more arrows in our quiver than other provinces, because they have already taken some of those tools into action.

We are relying only on going after those who don't pay appropriately. We're going after tax avoidance measures in the economy. We're going after the underground economy, which, by the way, has netted an additional \$224 million more as a result of those initiatives.

We're also controlling our debt. We now are paying \$140 million less than we had anticipated because we're borrowing \$25 billion less as a result of the actions that we're taking.

Those are the initiatives that we're taking, those are the tools that we're looking forward to enacting and ensuring that everybody pays their fair share.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: If there are so many arrows in the quiver, they should have skipped over the sell-off of Hydro One because virtually nobody in Ontario wanted them to use that arrow.

Thursday's fall economic statement shows job creation projections are down by 70,000 jobs over the next four years. That's like the entire city of Sarnia not being able to find a job. With a competitive dollar, we should have actually seen some job growth by now, not less growth and fewer jobs. Selling Hydro One is not going to create jobs here in the province of Ontario. Privatizing other assets will not create more growth.

Will the Acting Premier rule out selling more revenue-generating assets?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: Ontario and Ontarians have been doing a tremendous job of promoting our economy. In fact, Ontario now leads Canada in economic growth, and our unemployment rate is down to 6.8%—below the national average. Furthermore, we have over 560,000 new jobs since the depths of the recession because of the diversified economy that we have been employing and initiating.

Furthermore, I said very clearly that when we look at our assets, we look at those that are underperforming and not creating greater value. That is why LCBO and OPG

and some other assets are not being used: because they provide greater value. Hydro One had an opportunity to make more value for the province of Ontario, and it did, well beyond every expectation that most have had. The market bore a strong valuation. We still own 84% of that operation, which is now greater in value than it was even three weeks ago. We'll continue to do that to promote more value for all Ontarians.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The value went to their friends; it didn't go to the people of Ontario. That's what this finance minister is not telling the public.

Selling Hydro One will slow revenue growth. That is a fact.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development, second time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario's independent FAO shows that starting next year, the sale of Hydro One will start costing us money. That's going to slow revenue growth for this province. The fall economic update says that's exactly what's going to open the door to the necessity of new revenue tools or more revenue tools to be undertaken by this government.

So why is the Liberal government setting up Ontario families for more sell-offs and deeper cuts in the future?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The majority of Hydro One is still owned by Ontarians. The government of Ontario owns 84% of this company still today. As we proceed forward, 40% of this last IPO went to Ontarians, broader, in the retail sector. And pension companies, which the member opposite, staff and others are reliant upon, also are owners of some of these shares.

Going forward, the people of Ontario indirectly or directly still own a great part of this company, which has now been improved because of the actions we've taken. That's exactly what we're talking about. More importantly, it's about reinvesting into our economy, reinvesting in new assets, reinvesting in transit in Hamilton, where the member opposite is from. She would probably cut those very initiatives if she did not find sources of revenue and capital to make it so.

That's exactly what we've done. We've stipulated that, and we've actually rolled out a whole list of projects under way. That's what this is about.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Acting Premier. For months now, the government has climbed onto its high horse and said that the Hydro One sale was going to pay for infrastructure—right up until last Thursday, though, when they couldn't hide the truth any longer. A background document the government handed out for the fall economic statement said, "The improvement in the deficit projection for 2015-16 is mainly the result of the government's progress on the asset optimization strategy outlined in the 2015 budget

related to the recent Hydro One initial public offering...." The only thing they've sold is Hydro One.

1100

The Premier, the Minister of Energy and the Deputy Premier have all just been contradicted by the finance minister. My question is: Would they like to correct their record, or are they saying the finance minister wouldn't tell them what he was using the Hydro One money for?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we have assets. We have ongoing operations of government. We're trying to maximize value. We've very clearly stipulated that the asset gain from Hydro One, which is greater than even anticipated, is being reflected as a non-tax revenue, as it must. These are basic accounting principles.

We also went further and said we're dedicating all of that gain into the Trillium Trust, to dedicate those revenues to create even more by reinvesting in new infrastructure projects, that being public transit, including those opportunities—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, second time.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —communities. It talks about roads and bridges and expansions to various communities that will benefit from the redeployment of these assets to create new value for Ontarians. That's what we've done, and we've been very clear that that has been the case.

Furthermore, it also talks about the fact that we're paying less interest. It talks about the fact that we are collecting more revenues in other areas. That is ultimately how we're getting to balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Mr. Speaker, the flakes of snow haven't really even started to fly here in Toronto yet, but there has been a snow job going on for months over on that side of the House.

Finance tells us one thing, but we get another thing here in the House. Even the finance minister couldn't quite explain how money could be going to the deficit when ministers of the crown repeatedly told the House it would be spent on infrastructure. Maybe he's just sick of playing Pinocchio to Ed Clark's Geppetto.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

All the government has done here is temporarily plugged a \$1.1-billion hole. It's going to reappear again next year, just in time for them to sell more Hydro One shares.

Will the Acting Premier just admit that the money was never going to go to infrastructure, or is she just waiting for Ed Clark's latest memo too?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the only people who are double-counting here are members of the opposition when they claim that the reserve is being used twice, when in fact that's not the case.

Furthermore, we've been clear that non-tax revenue has to be reflected as revenue. That's exactly what we've

done. And we've said that we're going to invest it, and we are.

Listen, on pages 27 and 28, we offer just a small amount of those projects that are under way for the benefit of communities like the member's own, so that we can greatly appreciate the value for our economy and for our families in our communities.

By the way, let's be clear that Ontarians and Ontario still hold a substantive amount of Hydro One, which is more valuable than it was before. And we've made it very clear that no one person or company can own more than 10% of Hydro One. We will still retain a greater degree of ownership, greater opportunities for revenue that's being sourced from a better company, and we're generating further revenue from reinvesting in our economy. We've stipulated that very clearly in our FES in that regard.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. In the last fiscal year, the government forced Ontario's electricity consumers to pay \$956 million in debt retirement charges on their electricity bills. These charges were supposed to pay down the residual stranded debt left over from the old Ontario Hydro. Instead, last week we found that these charges paid down only \$400 million of the residual stranded debt. What did the government do with the remaining \$556 million?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite may know, there is stranded debt. That's the legacy debt that was left over from the dismantling of the old Ontario Hydro. That Conservative legacy left \$20 billion in stranded debt. We've been paying that down regularly over time, and it will continue even still. Notwithstanding that, we've taken an amount from the IPO that's being applied to the residual stranded debt. The other components of it go to actually pay direct debt from the OEFC, and we will continue to do that, as we must and as we will.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again to the Acting Premier: Mr. Peter Kormos would have said "horse feathers" to that.

Rather than be upfront with Ontarians, this government is rewriting the laws just so they can play accounting games. First, they changed the law so that they can give IOUs instead of cash to the Ontario Electricity Financial Corp. to pay the Hydro debt. Then they rewrote the law so that they can put \$2.2 billion in non-cash benefits into the Trillium Trust, so-called benefits that don't provide a single penny in actual spendable cash for infrastructure.

Finally, they rewrote the law so that they can continue collecting \$600 million a year in debt retirement charges without putting it towards debt.

Instead of rewriting laws and playing accounting games, why won't the government just admit that the Hydro One sell-off has nothing to do with infrastructure

or debt repayment? Why is the Liberal government taking money from the electricity ratepayers to play accounting games with its books for political purposes?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's interesting; the member opposite now does not cite the FAO and his explanation of residual stranded debt, and the stranded debt—he very clearly outlines that the government of Ontario has been paying it down, that there is a great degree of uncertainty as to what will happen next. We have applied all of those debt retirement charges directly to residual stranded debt, and that's how it's happening. It has been going down. As a result of what we've done more recently, we've been able to garner even more opportunity to pay down debt. We've paid down debt by another billion dollars.

We will continue to apply debt to the OEFC and the component of stranded debt, as required, will continue to go down from the sources that we are applying. But we are very, very clear that the debt retirement charge for residential will be eliminated by the end of this year, and we're eliminating it for all industrial and businesses as well by April 2018, nine months ahead of schedule, so that they have certainty and further reductions in their cost overall.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. This ministry has to balance the priorities of communities, industry and our natural heritage, which includes the important role of environmental stewardship.

The forests in this province are important in the fight against global warming. We know that forests capture, convert and retain carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas that significantly contributes to climate change. Ontario's forests have an important role to play when it comes to our fight against climate change, as nearly 70%, or 93 million hectares, of our province are covered in forest.

Could the minister please tell us what steps Ontario is taking to preserve our forests while balancing the need for wood products?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for the question. The stewardship of Ontario's forest is a core component of my ministry's responsibilities. Through legislation like the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, we require that forests are managed to meet the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations.

Our province works with the forestry industry to ensure responsible harvesting of the province's forests. We do so by setting annual limits on how much industry is allowed to harvest, as well as ensuring that forestry on crown lands takes place within areas designated for managed forestry. Even within the managed forests, six million hectares are protected areas where forestry cannot occur. Beyond the managed forests, we've protected an additional 225,000 square kilometres of northern Ontario through the Far North Act.

We also protect Ontario's forest biodiversity, increasing the forests' capacity to sequester greenhouse gases.

The renewal of forests is a priority. Between 2003 and 2013, licence holders have planted more than one billion trees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'd like to thank the minister for showing us how Ontario is working to preserve this very important resource while supporting an industry that directly and indirectly employs nearly 170,000 people in this province.

While it is important to maintain the forests Ontario already has, I think most Ontarians would agree that meeting the challenges of climate change requires great leadership. Our newly announced climate change strategy sets a long-term vision for this province that calls for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to 80% below 1990 levels by the year 2050.

There are few initiatives that match that kind of ambition, both in long-term thinking and capacity to address greenhouse gases—as trees do. Could the minister please share with the House his ministry's strategy to expand forest coverage in Ontario and explain our global contribution in capturing carbon dioxide?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, thanks to the member from Kitchener Centre.

Our ministry is doing its part to contribute to the global efforts on climate change by working in partnership with Forests Ontario and over 65 conservation agency partners across Ontario to deliver our government's 50 Million Tree program.

This program will see the planting of 50 million trees and the establishment of new forests on suitable private rural and urban lands across Ontario by 2025. By doing so, we anticipate being able to remove 6.6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by 2050. To support healthy forest environments in a variety of settings across the province, our goal is to plant one million trees in urban areas, working with municipalities and other partners. We've planted nearly 20 million trees since we started this program.

1110

With the continued support of our partners and Ontarians at large, we're on target to meet our goals. On a final note, I encourage Ontarians to look into helping us through one of those partners. The program offers subsidies. It's a program that we're very proud of and look forward to continuing in the years ahead.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: To the Minister of Transportation: Last week we learned that since the scathing auditor's report into the Liberal government's substandard winter road maintenance contracts that risk the safety of Ontario motorists, four of those contracts have now failed. Since I asked earlier this month about the two contracts that had failed in Kenora and Sudbury, there are now two more: one in the Ottawa area, and now we hear whispers that they've walked away from the Niagara contract as well.

Will the minister now admit that the performance-based substandard winter road contracting they saddled us with in 2009 is a complete and utter failure, and restore the pre-2009 former Progressive Conservative system of winter maintenance that ensured motorist safety?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from Kitchener—Conestoga for his question. I know that he referenced the auditor's report from earlier this year on the winter maintenance file. As every member of the House knows, including that MPP, we accepted all eight of the recommendations that flowed from her report.

He referenced the new contract that we have in the Kenora area. That is a contract that was actually awarded to a company from British Columbia that has a long-standing and strong track record of delivering winter maintenance—year-round maintenance in fact—in British Columbia.

We continue to work with all of our area maintenance contractors. I've had the chance to speak with all of them between last winter season and this winter season. People in this Legislature have heard me say that we've added more equipment, both in the north and the south; that we've added more opportunities for anti-icing liquid. We'll continue to work on this file. I said this just a few weeks ago: We expect that this winter season our contractors will perform according to their contractual obligations.

I look forward to the supplementary question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the minister: I'm glad he brought that additional equipment up in his answer. I'll remind him, in fact, of the auditor's finding that in one case the Liberal government incurred an annual cost of \$1.7 million for additional equipment—equipment that should have been there in the first place.

The minister has said himself that taxpayers have purchased over 100 new pieces of equipment for highways both in the north and the south—just like you heard. The minister has now walked away from four contracts in the north and in the south. Will the minister tell us how much of that equipment was bought to support these four failed contracts? How much?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, I'm not quite sure exactly what the member opposite is getting at with his supplementary question. He suggests on the one hand that we have a challenge in the winter maintenance program and he cites the auditor's report. Then he criticizes us—I think, if I understood it correctly—for moving forward aggressively to make sure that we address both northern communities and southern Ontario communities and bring more resources to bear.

Everybody in this chamber has heard me say this before: Our winter highway maintenance action plan, which is deployed and has been over the last number of months, has a number of initiatives including increasing the amount of equipment and material that we have on the highways right across the province, both in the north and in the south.

In addition, we have improved the Ontario 511 website. We have launched a Track My Plow program both in the Owen Sound and Simcoe areas, and we anticipate further expansion of that program. We are increasing the use of anti-icing liquids before winter storms, and we continue to work with all of our area maintenance contractors to make sure that they are fulfilling their contractual obligations to the people of Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Acting Premier. Each and every resident of long-term care deserves to live in safety and dignity. But, today, for too many seniors and vulnerable Ontarians, that's just not the case. We know that the government has failed to provide the behavioural supports that seniors with dementia need.

As New Democrats revealed earlier this month, there is an urgent and pressing need to tackle violence in long-term-care homes. When the rights of patients are violated, like the Thompsons, like the Cuthberts and like the Karrers, families are left in the dark.

Seniors, their families and front-line staff want to see action now. When will this Liberal government actually step up and implement the coroner's recommendations to improve care for all Ontario long-term-care residents?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Associate Minister of Health.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I thank the member opposite for her question. I also thank the coroner and his team for his report. There are many valuable recommendations in that report.

What I have committed to is that I have asked my ministry to look at the recommendations that the coroner has come forward with, in particular the recommendation around striking a committee or a task force to look at resident-on-resident abuse in long-term-care homes, in the context that we already have a province-wide dementia strategy. I've asked them to report back to me and let me know whether the existing dementia strategy is enough and will address the concerns raised by the coroner, or if we need to strike another task force. I look forward to their recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Again to the Acting Premier: The minister gives us the same old answer, but the families want to see action. The coroner's report on long-term care confirms what Ontarians have seen for years: There are simply not enough staff and not enough dedicated supports to ensure that every resident receives the care they need.

This Liberal government needs to take responsibility and fix the problems in long-term care, not by cutting services, but by investing in our public health care system. Will the Acting Premier commit today to tell Ontarians before the end of the year how this Liberal government will respond to each and every recommendation from the coroner's report to improve long-term care? And if not, why not?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Again, I appreciate the question.

Here are the facts. We have been investing in long-term care. We have increased the operating funding by almost \$2 billion since coming to office, and made a 2% increase in 2015-16 for resident care needs. We've opened 10,000 new long-term-care beds since taking office, and 30,000 beds are being redeveloped, on top of 13,000 which have already been redeveloped.

And we continue to invest in long-term-care homes. Some more examples: We have hired 900 new nurses and personal support workers. The first 30 of 75 new nurse practitioners are being brought online. Our government has made it mandatory for a home to notify the ministry immediately and contact the police when there's a suspected or witnessed incident of abuse or neglect of a resident.

We are committed to safety, and we look forward to working with all of our partners on this.

HYDRO GENERATION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last Monday, the government unanimously passed the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, 2015. With this important piece of legislation now in place, we can now ensure that Ontario never returns to the days of using dirty coal-fired plants to generate electricity for the province.

This is a significant milestone for the province. I know that when Ontario phased out coal-fired generation, it was not only the single largest climate change initiative undertaken in North America, but also provided significant health benefits to Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could you please update the House on the benefits of eliminating coal from our electricity mix?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Scarborough-Rouge River for the question.

We're proud that our government has passed the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, ensuring that Ontario never uses dirty coal generation again. Getting off coal was the single largest climate change initiative in North America, saving approximately \$4.4 billion a year in avoided health and environmental costs.

Ontario has made significant progress in reducing emissions from the energy sector through the phasing-out of coal-fired generation and shifting to non-emitting energy sources.

I would like to recognize that the Ontario Lung Association is here with us today, and they have been great advocates for the health benefits of Ontario's coal phase-out.

Getting off dirty coal allows for a better quality of life for people with asthma and less children suffering from air-quality-related illnesses.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Minister. The Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, 2015, clearly demonstrates

Ontario's leadership in the fight against climate change. My constituents will be pleased to hear about our government's foresight and leadership in reducing electricity system emissions in Ontario.

Climate change is an issue that is not going to disappear, and Ontario needs to remain a global leader going forward, because if nobody takes action, it will be impossible to avoid its catastrophic consequences.

With the elimination of coal, I understand that Ontario has become a leader in the generation of clean energy. Mr. Speaker, through you, to the minister: Could you please provide the House with some examples of Ontario's clean energy generation?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Our government is committed, and in fact remains committed, to investing in a clean, modern and reliable electricity system that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and provides cleaner air for today and into the future.

Ninety per cent of the power generated in Ontario during 2014 came from clean sources of energy, such as water, nuclear and non-hydro renewables, including solar, wind and biomass. Ontario has approximately 15,200 megawatts of wind, solar, bioenergy and hydroelectricity energy online.

Ontario has firmly established itself as a North American leader in the development, use and manufacturing of clean energy, and now has the fastest-growing clean tech sector in Canada, with firms that employ 65,000 people, creating \$8 billion of annual revenue. Today, Ontario has one of the cleanest and most modern electricity systems, creating a healthier population.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Deputy Premier. While I'm standing here in the Legislature, hundreds of people are standing out in the cold on Memorial Drive in North Bay. They are rallying today to protest the cuts of 350 front-line health care workers at the North Bay Regional Health Centre over the past three years, including 100 nurses who were fired.

Health care professionals and patients in my riding are concerned that the quality of care we're getting in Nipissing is in jeopardy, and it's creating turmoil in my community.

Recently, the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions stated that North Bay's hospital needs an additional \$23 million in funding per year just to meet the Canadian average for a similar facility. My question is, will the Deputy Premier commit to restoring proper ongoing funding to the North Bay hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I want to start out by saying how proud I am of the health workers at that hospital, a relatively new hospital, built just a few days ago, because with our investments—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: A few years ago.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Did I say "a few days ago"? It was built a few years ago. We're not that quick, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say that, as a result of our funding increases, which for North Bay hospital are almost unprecedented—in fact, a \$100-million increase since 2003. That's an increase in funding to that hospital of 128%. As a result of those investments, we're seeing the quality of care go up. We're seeing wait times go down dramatically. In fact, nine out of 10 patients have seen wait times go down at that hospital, including, for example, cataract surgery, where the wait time has gone down by a dramatic 81%.

We know there's more work to do. We know this hospital and the administration are working closely with their LHIN to address any financial pressures, but we're working closely to make sure they continue to maintain those great accomplishments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Deputy Premier: Yes, it is a new hospital. How do you explain closing 60 beds in this brand new hospital? The hospital cuts come at the same time the government has locked out 200 workers at Ontario Northland for more than two weeks now. They are still hoping the Premier will act on their request to send the dispute to mediation or arbitration.

As I have stated many times in this Legislature, North Bay is a community in disarray. The situation at our hospital could get even worse. Without the immediate, one-time funding the hospital is seeking, another 50 jobs will be lost in North Bay. That would be devastating, especially as the holidays approach.

What message from the government do you have this morning for the hundreds of people standing on Memorial Drive in North Bay looking for an answer?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, my message would be, thank God that party isn't in government, after claiming that they would fire 100,000 people, many of them health workers.

What we're doing is we're working closely with the LHIN and with the hospital. I have to say that when the member opposite talks about closing beds, he should get his facts right, because in fact many of those beds, about 30 of them, are actually beds for mental health patients. It has been determined, through evidence, good science and outcomes, that those individuals, those vulnerable people, can actually be cared for better in the community.

Those residential, supportive opportunities actually have been and are being created in the community, so those beds and that support are actually being transferred out to where they can get better outcomes. I would hope the member opposite would support that kind of good evidence.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Last week, families in Whitby and Oshawa

learned that yet another 21 workers will be laid off because of this government's cuts to health care.

Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences says it is "increasingly challenging" to grapple with the Liberals' five-year freeze on hospital funding. The Liberals' decision to squeeze Ontario's hospitals means that less care for patients is taking place, with more worry for families, and lost paycheques and layoffs for dedicated workers.

Today, families in Whitby have a straightforward question and they deserve a straightforward answer: Will this Liberal government step up and stop the layoffs of 21 hospital workers in Whitby? Yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I'm proud of the hard work that those health care workers at Ontario Shores and in other facilities in that area of Whitby—the good work, the important and essential work that they do every day.

We're making changes to our health care system. I have to admit that we're transforming it. We're reforming it. We're making those bold decisions, including investing more money, \$250 million this year, next year and the year after; new money in home and community care, because we know that that's where people want to be. That's where we can care for them and provide the supports that they need to be cared for appropriately. The outcomes are better.

So I do admit that sometimes that requires shifting resources around if we want to invest more in mental health services in the community. Those funds—we do continue to increase the health care budget year after year. But we need to be prudent and we need to make responsible decisions that reflect science, evidence and good outcomes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I would suspect they would rather this government save their jobs than be proud of the work that they're now pulling out from underneath them.

The 21 layoffs at the hospital in Whitby are just the latest cuts to hospitals on a long, long list. The Liberals are forcing 84 jobs to be eliminated at hospitals in Belleville and Trenton. At noon today, families in North Bay, as has already been mentioned, will rally against the staggering 150 job cuts at their local hospital.

Every one of those workers in our hospitals plays an important role. They help provide care to patients in their most vulnerable moments, but that doesn't seem to be a priority for this Liberal government. When will the Liberals start listening to people in Whitby, Oshawa, North Bay, Toronto and right across the province and stop cutting the hospital supports, the hospital care that families rely on?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know the opposition parties like to talk about the gross numbers. They like to talk about what is being proposed as part of a plan to reduce a number of jobs in a particular health facility. But often those jobs are empty to begin with; they're unfilled

positions or they're jobs that may be transferring to another part of the hospital, to another program, or maybe that a different type of health care professional, of which we have almost 30 different types—it may be that it's a job that's better held by a different kind of health care professional. You need to release the first job in order to create the second.

But we're also making those important investments that Ontarians are asking for. We are listening, and they're telling us that they want more home and community care. We are hiring people, nurses, health care workers and PSWs in the home and community care system. In fact, 24,000 more nurses in Ontario—all those nurses may not be in our hospitals, but they're in our communities.

1130

FIRST NATIONS

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Last week, the Premier, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and many ministers met with First Nation leaders here in the Legislature. I was privileged to be present in one of those meetings. This annual gathering of aboriginal leaders is an important part of our government's efforts to ensure our relationship is a modern and mutually beneficial one. I'm proud to be part of a government that's committed to building and maintaining good relationships with First Nation partners.

Can the minister please tell us more about last week's meeting with First Nations leadership?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'd like to thank the member for Newmarket–Aurora for that question.

Earlier this year, our government signed a historical political accord with the Chiefs of Ontario. It provides a platform for First Nations and the province to work together on common priorities. Our government is committed to continuing to build positive relationships with First Nations, allowing us to work with them in a spirit of mutual respect and collaboration to improve the quality of life in First Nation communities.

Regular meetings with First Nation leadership are an important step toward achieving this progress. We will develop policies and initiatives that will lead to improved outcomes for First Nations.

Last week's meetings extended over three days here at the Legislature and at various off-site locations. They considered a whole host of topics of particular interest to First Nations and to this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Minister. I'm proud that our government is building such close ties between Ontario and First Nation leadership. I understand that having the chiefs at the Legislature provided an opportunity for them to meet with a record number of ministers—19 in total—to discuss a wide range of issues such as remote infrastructure, justice, poverty reduction and aboriginal education. These are important issues that profoundly impact First Nation communities and communities right across the province.

Can the minister explain some of the key issues discussed during last week's events?

Hon. David Zimmer: Meetings like this play an important part in maintaining the ongoing dialogue with First Nations. I'd like to thank my cabinet colleagues for taking the time to meet with First Nation leadership and to be a part of that dialogue.

One of the major themes discussed last week was the environment. With the Premier in Paris this week to discuss climate change, it is important to acknowledge that it could have a very real impact on many First Nation communities who depend on our ecosystem for food supply and economic opportunities.

Let me say this, Speaker: First Nations have an important role in the advice that they offer on climate change issues. That's why these dialogues are so important. Through co-operation and consultation with First Nations, we can work to find solutions to these problems that benefit Ontario, Canada and First Nations.

FAMILY DOCTORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It concerns this government's lack of consultation before cutting family doctors—and specifically the New Graduate Entry Program or NGEП. I've given the minister a copy of the letter he received from the chair of the department of family medicine at Stratford General Hospital and the president and CEO of the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance. Here's what they had to say about the government's changes: "They will almost certainly spell the end of the involvement of family physicians at Stratford General Hospital."

So I have to ask the minister, can he see how seriously this would damage health care in communities like ours and how does he respond to the HPHA's concerns?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I really appreciate this question. I need to, first of all, stress that earlier this year, we made some changes to incent our family doctors to join family health teams in the high-needs parts of this province. I think all of us would support that laudable goal.

However, we also saw that there are family doctors who have done their training in a family health team environment and maybe don't have the opportunity, for a variety of reasons, to practise in a high-needs area. We created this program as an opportunity, but I want to stress that it's 100% voluntary. It doesn't force any physician to do anything. In fact, it's just specific to those areas which aren't high needs.

But it does point out a very important challenge that we face. Many, many, many months ago—and repeatedly—we shared our ideas with the OMA, the Ontario Medical Association, in great detail in terms of what we were thinking. Throughout those many, many months and repeated efforts, we did not get a single response, a single piece of advice—any advice—from the OMA whatsoever.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: The HPHA is very clear: Policies designed for large urban centres very often have unintended consequences in small- and medium-sized communities. We're told that in our local hospitals family physicians may no longer be able to care for in-patients because of this government's changes. We're told this could add millions of dollars to our hospitals' budgets, budgets that haven't seen an increase for four years.

We need to know this minister is listening. When it comes to the NGEП, doctors and hospitals in small communities do not want it and did not ask for it. Will the minister fix this?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We created this program for new grads because we were listening. We were listening to medical students, new grads and family doctors.

I want to emphasize that we repeatedly and for many, many months, since late last spring, shared our proposal—it was simply a proposal at that stage—with the Ontario Medical Association. They obviously didn't share it with their membership. Actually, we created a program after significant stakeholder consultation but without any input or advice whatsoever from the OMA. Fortunately, the Ontario council of family practitioners were not going to be part of that silence. They came forward with a number of recommendations, including specific recommendations that I am confident are going to address the specific concerns from the Huron Perth Healthcare Alliance.

POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Acting Premier. A recently released report on food bank usage in Ontario shows that, since 2008, food bank usage has risen nearly 15%. The numbers speak for themselves: 90% of food bank users are rental or social housing tenants; 12% are senior citizens living in poverty; and 27% of single seniors are now living in poverty in Ontario.

Will the Acting Premier admit that her government is absolutely failing vulnerable and impoverished Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our work on poverty reduction is strong, thoughtful, and it is getting results. We acknowledge there is more to be done, but we have started along a path that is showing real results for people.

Take the example of a single mom with two little kids working full-time at a minimum wage job. When we took office, her income was less than \$20,000 a year. She was better off on social assistance than she was working full-time at a minimum wage job. Fast-forward to where we are today. That same individual has an income of close to \$30,000, a remarkable increase in the well-being of that family.

We are focused on a number of measures. We are measuring our progress, and we have recently announced in the new Poverty Reduction Strategy that we're focused on eliminating chronic homelessness in 10 years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We recently learned that 48.6% of food banks in Ontario are reporting an increase in use; 34% of food bank users are children and a third of the people living in poverty are senior citizens. Those numbers are nothing to be proud of. This government has had 12 years to act on poverty. Vulnerable Ontarians are falling further and further behind.

Will this government finally make fighting poverty a priority—not in 10 more years—now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That is exactly what is happening. I know that the member opposite has read that report from the Ontario Association of Food Banks, as have I and many others on this side. We were very, very pleased to see that this year there was a drop of about 4% in visits to food banks. That is not the only way to measure progress, but that is a very encouraging statistic.

As I say, we have taken several steps. We now have a willing federal partner, something we have not had for the past decade. We have a federal partner who is making a commitment through the Canada child benefit that will exceed our target of reducing child poverty by 25%. We always knew that we couldn't do it alone. We always knew that we needed support across governments. Finally, we have that support, and I'm excited about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The time for question period has ended. There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to introduce Shannon Murree. Shannon has come to hear my statement today about the Shoebox campaign. Welcome, Shannon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I know that my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services earlier today, before question period, acknowledged that a group from her riding will be coming into the chamber. I gather that they'll be coming in shortly. They are a grade 5 class from a school in Richmond Hill, St. Marguerite d'Youville. I mention it specifically, as well as my colleague, because somebody who used to work for us on this side of the House, Maria Papadopoulos, is travelling with the group because her daughter, Zoe Vacilotto, is in that class. I just wanted to acknowledge them again. I'm gathering that they're going to be in the chamber very shortly. In fact, that could be them coming in right now.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Ted Arnott: As members of this House know, for years we've been advocating for a bypass on High-

way 6 around the community of Morriston in the township of Puslinch.

I've been in Puslinch township the past two weekends to attend public events. People there understand the Highway 6 Morriston bypass is urgently needed. The traffic bottleneck in Morriston directly impacts the safety of local residents. However, it extends beyond that. Because Highway 6 is such a key economic corridor, connecting the 401 to the Hamilton-Niagara region, as well as to the US border, the traffic jams, which often stretch for kilometres, are costing our provincial economy millions of dollars each and every year. This was demonstrated in a University of Waterloo study conducted two years ago.

Mayor Dennis Lever and township council have pushed strongly for the Highway 6 Morriston bypass project. The county of Wellington, the city of Guelph and the city of Hamilton all support the Morriston bypass. So do the Guelph and Hamilton chambers of commerce, as well as Tim Hortons, Maple Leaf Foods, Nestlé Waters, Canada Bread and Cargill.

I appreciate the interest the Minister of Transportation has shown in our project. We're taking him at his word that he's pushing for it. And we know the Premier has also publicly acknowledged the importance of the Morriston bypass in this very House.

Based on my experience in the Legislature, I'm aware that the Ministry of Transportation will be preparing its pre-budget submissions right now. I urge the minister to continue to push hard. We've been waiting for this project for a generation. Let's work together to get it done.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yesterday I was part of a joyous and yet serious assembly out on the front lawns of Queen's Park. About 1,000 activists came together on very short notice to speak about climate change. I got to sing, which is always a pleasure, with the Raging Grannies. That was fun.

They wanted me to come here today with a message. I'm just going to quote from our friend from the Toronto Star, Thomas Walkom, who said, "The longer we postpone these actions ... the more likely it is that we will face mass flooding, drought, civil unrest and other crises resulting from extreme weather," not to mention other things.

He also went on to say, "Much has been made of Ontario's decision to join Quebec and California in a so-called cap-and-trade scheme to limit carbon emissions." But as his colleague Martin Regg Cohn pointed out, "Ontario has been unconscionably slow in attacking climate change and won't join the Quebec-California scheme until 2017."

We need action, Mr. Speaker, and we need action now. We have a federal government that is going to Paris without any clear cap on their emissions, without any willingness to have firm guidelines or legislation in place. The time for greenwashing is over. The time for green action is now.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Across Canada, November marks Lung Health Month. Lung disease affects one in five Canadians. Sadly, lung cancer kills more Canadians than breast, colon, ovarian and prostate cancers combined. In Ontario, 2.4 million people are living with asthma, COPD and lung cancer, and this number is expected to grow to 3.6 million in the next 30 years. With these alarming figures and significant associated health care costs, we must do more to combat this terrible disease.

I have first-hand knowledge of the toll it takes on patients and their families as my oldest son suffers from lung disease. Health care professionals are calling on our government to initiate a lung health strategy. To that end, I presented Bill 41 last November entitled the Lung Health Act, and I encourage all members in the House to support it.

One initiative that brings hope is the Ontario Lung Association's Breathing As One campaign. It calls for improved collaboration to move beyond traditional lung research and the battle against the disease. Lung health is important to all, and I know that all members join me in thanking the health care professionals and their providers for their work in supporting those living with lung disease.

Thank you also to the members who support the all-party lung health caucus, and to my fellow co-chairs, the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London and the member for Nickel Belt. As Ontario Lung Association President George Habib reminds us, "When you can't breathe, nothing else matters."

JANICE BYE

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise today to recognize the late Janice Bye. Ms. Bye, a native of Holstein, Ontario, was known in the Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound community as a great advocate for children. Over the two decades that Janice worked as a pediatric physiotherapist, she endeavoured to make a difference in the lives of thousands of young people. Many of them are society's most vulnerable children.

Ms. Bye worked as a caregiver with Closing the Gap Healthcare Group, serving all schools in the Bluewater District School Board and its almost 20,000 students. Her work involved developing physiotherapy programs for special needs children, ensuring they were accommodated with proper seating and mobility devices. She assisted children recovering from medical procedures and those who were dealing with a loss of mobility, strength and endurance due to illness or injury.

I'm told Ms. Bye was always brave, loving and energetic, embracing disability and diversity. Most people remember her for the overwhelming contribution of care, encouragement and compassion that she provided local children and their families.

After she died suddenly and tragically in a car crash last June, I heard from educational assistants, teachers and families whose children she supported through her

work. They said, "Janice was infallible in her work and devotion to special-needs children" and "truly gifted in her work and who will be deeply missed."

Christina Schnell McDonald, whose daughter Natalie was in Ms. Bye's care, personally reached out to me immediately to see if a special acknowledgement could be awarded to recognize Janice for her "above the call of duty" personal care and commitment. She said, "Janice was an amazing person and provided such wonderful care. We need people to know just how much of a difference she made in the life of Natalie and many, many others."

Ms. Bye was posthumously recognized for her amazing life's work and bestowed the Heroes in the Home award by the South West CCAC on October 20 in a ceremony at Stone Tree Golf and Fitness Club.

Ms. Bye will be remembered in the hearts of all she touched as a caring and dedicated children's physiotherapist. Most of all, she will be remembered for being the one who always went above and beyond her call of duty.

RENEWABILITY ENERGY INC.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to recognize a green manufacturing company in Waterloo region that I had the pleasure of visiting on November 20. RenewABILITY Energy Inc. is the global leader in drain water heat recovery technology with their patented Power-Pipe heat exchanger system. This year they're celebrating their 15th anniversary. This technology reduces energy consumption by using outgoing drain water to preheat incoming cold fresh water.

In Ontario, over 50,000 homes currently have this technology. The Power-Pipe is easily retrofitted into homes and easily installed in new buildings. In fact, it requires no maintenance, lasts up to 100 years and is about 10 times more cost-effective than solar water heating systems.

Energy code credits for this technology are now available in Ontario, many states, the UK and Europe. In fact, Manitoba has recently made drain water heat recovery mandatory in all new residential construction, a change that's worth considering.

However, this industry has been having problems in Ontario. Right now, drain water heat recovery has been excluded from the 2017 prescriptive compliance options for single-family and multi-family residential buildings. It's costing green manufacturing jobs in this province, something the government has suggested is a priority.

It is my hope that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will recognize and fix the problem. Drain water heat recovery technology should be included in any potential energy retrofit program that will help Ontarians effectively and affordably reduce their carbon emissions.

SHOEBOX PROJECT

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Last Saturday in the great riding of Barrie, a local restaurant called Big Chris BBQ hosted the fourth annual Shoebox Project.

The Shoebox Project is a charity that asks people to fill a shoebox with small luxury items for women at local shelters. Each shoebox contains items valued at \$50 or more that a woman would enjoy but not splurge on for herself in difficult times. Luxury items such as fancy socks, gift cards, lipsticks and a variety of toiletries are welcomed by these women. These articles brighten the holiday season and let the women know that they are special and not forgotten.

1310

Putting together a shoebox is easy, and this small gesture of kindness is very much appreciated. The Shoebox Project has helped such organizations as the Women and Children's Shelter of Barrie and the Elizabeth Fry Society of Simcoe County.

Although this event in Barrie is over, I encourage everyone in this House to fill a box and deliver it in your community by visiting www.shoeboxproject.com. Also, the women's caucus of this Legislature is collecting boxes to distribute to shelters and to Syrian refugees. Good news: You can still take part if you deliver filled shoeboxes to room 340 by noon on Monday December 7.

Thanks to Shannon Murree, the local coordinator for this Simcoe county project, and to all the volunteers and contributors involved in this project for the work that they do to help these women have their own special parcel on Christmas morning.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Last week the Premier came to Perth–Wellington to attend the Mitchell Rotary club's rural-urban night. I'm glad she was able to visit one of the communities that I have the privilege to represent.

The Premier spoke about the illusion of a rural-urban gap, but, unfortunately, it is not entirely an illusion. In fact, my first resolution as an MPP dealt with this issue: I called on the government to re-evaluate policies that negatively affect residents of rural and small-town Ontario. It's now four years later, and the government is nowhere close to bridging the rural-urban gap.

There are many examples: Our municipalities still bear the brunt of provincial funding cuts. The provincial government slashed the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. Three years ago, the government abruptly cancelled the Connecting Links program, even though it was working. They recently revived the program, but at a fraction of its previous funding. Now, it appears that the municipalities will have to compete for funds they need to maintain provincial infrastructure.

In Mitchell, the Premier joked about the municipality of West Perth applying 11 times for the same project under Connecting Links. The people I represent aren't laughing. If the Premier is aware of the need for a new bridge, why should the municipality have to apply 11 times and counting?

Whether it's health care policies, energy policies or infrastructure funding programs, this government has turned its back on rural Ontario. It's time they changed course.

BLESSED CARDINAL NEWMAN CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: As part of our government's ongoing support of student achievement and well-being, I'm pleased to rise today and speak on an important funding announcement that took place in my riding earlier this month.

I was delighted to announce that Blessed Cardinal Newman, a local Catholic high school, has been approved for \$30 million for a new replacement facility. This project is part of Ontario's ambitious capital priority plan which includes the construction of new facilities and a strong commitment for significant improvements to existing schools. The new state-of-the-art complex will provide 1,110 local students with an engaging and modern educational environment.

Blessed Cardinal Newman school has been serving the community of Scarborough Southwest for over 40 years and has, deservedly, earned a strong reputation for excellence in academics, the arts and athletics. It offers Specialist High Skills Major programs, advanced placement courses, extended French and a gifted enrichment program. This funding will allow Blessed Cardinal Newman to continue serving the local community and will create immeasurable benefits for students and local residents.

Supporting education is one of the most effective ways we have to ensure a successful and prosperous future for everyone in Ontario. I'm proud that Ontario continues to emphasize the value of a world-class education system. I look forward to more announcements in the future as we continue to support and invest in students and their families.

SPORTS HALLS OF FAME

Mr. Chris Ballard: November 21 was national sports day in Canada. Sport is part of our nation's identity. It teaches us a healthy lifestyle and leadership; it builds bridges between people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

In Newmarket–Aurora, the community understands the importance of sport: It brings people together. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand here today to acknowledge both the Newmarket and Aurora sports halls of fame inductees for 2015. Both of these organizations are dedicated to recognizing sports excellence in the community.

The 2015 inductees for the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame include Alan Dean, who, despite losing his leg, is actively involved in the Aurora Youth Soccer Club, both as a competitor and a coach; Mark Heese, a three-time Olympian who won a bronze medal in beach volleyball in the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta; Kenneth Sinclair, who founded and built the Timberlane Tennis and Country Club in 1987; and Lowell McClenney, who anchored the best cable TV sports show going, called Sports Beat Aurora, which filled the airwaves with local sports events unique to Aurora.

I'd also like to recognize the inductees to the Newmarket Sports Hall of Fame: Jimmy Brennan, the former captain of Toronto FC; Joe Murphy, a former first overall selection in the NHL who went on to win the Stanley Cup in 1990 with the Oilers; runner Andrew Coates; the 1909 Talagoo lacrosse team; and Margaret Davis and Sally Brice, who founded the Newmarket Figure Skating Club in the 1950s.

Congratulations to all.

VISITORS

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: They were not in the chamber when I did the introduction, and they were not in the chamber when the member from Oak Ridges-Markham, the Minister of Community and Social Services, introduced them earlier today before question period, but they are in the chamber now. The grade 5 students from St. Marguerite d'Youville are here today. I know this is now their third introduction today, but specifically Zoe Vacilotto and her mother, Maria Papadopoulos, who at one point worked here, and all of the other students, parents and teachers who are here from the school: Welcome to Ontario's Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's make it four: Welcome.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Standing order 63(a) provides that "the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday of November of each calendar year."

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain ministries and offices on Thursday, November 26, 2015, as required by the standing orders of this House and by order of the House dated Monday, September 14, 2015, pursuant to standing order 63(b) the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education and Office of Franco-phone Affairs are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Accordingly, the estimates 2015-16, of these ministries and offices are deemed to be passed by the Standing Committee on Estimates and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale, abrogeant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale et modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Carried.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 3, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the parliamentary calendar.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that notwithstanding standing order 6(a), when the House adjourns on Thursday, April 21, 2016, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, May 2, 2016; and

That the House shall continue to meet in the spring meeting period until Thursday, June 9, 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley moves that, notwithstanding order 6(a), when the House adjourns on Thursday, April 21, 2015, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, May 2, 2016; and in the spring meeting period meet until Thursday, June 9, 2016. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

1320

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Monday, November 30, 2015; Tuesday, December 1, 2015; Monday, December 7, 2015; and Tuesday, December 8, 2015, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Monday, November 30—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

It also makes tobacco products less tempting by banning the sale of flavoured tobacco, including menthol, and permits the government to further limit exposure to second-hand smoke in public areas.

The Making Healthier Choices Act also bans the sale and supply of e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 19. It bans the sale of e-cigarettes in certain places, such as hospitals or pharmacies. It prohibits the use of e-cigarettes in certain places, such as enclosed workshops and enclosed public spaces. Taken together, these changes make it harder for youth to obtain e-cigarettes.

Our government has been working alongside partners like the Ontario Lung Association, who have been instrumental in helping us to advance our goal of making Ontario the lowest-smoking jurisdiction in Canada. For that, they have my sincere thanks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I too would like to welcome and thank the Ontario Lung Association for their hard work in our province and also working to promote lung health. It's the end of Lung Month and there have been many events throughout Ontario promoting lung health and the importance of breathing. We know that more than 2.4 million people in Ontario, or one in five, have chronic lung disease, be it lung cancer, asthma or COPD.

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths for both men and women. Lung cancer alone kills more than breast, ovarian, colon and prostate cancer combined, and the primary cause of lung cancer is smoking, although 16% of people with lung cancer never smoked a day in their lives. I think that's quite important to highlight. You wouldn't think that would be the matter, but it's important to remove that stigma from people who are diagnosed with lung cancer; they have not necessarily smoked during their lifetime. It is estimated that a smoker's risk for developing lung cancer can be lowered to almost normal just 10 years after they stop smoking.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to mention asthma, which is one of the most common chronic diseases that make life difficult for everyone to breathe. In fact, one in five children suffer from this disease, and it's very important that we ensure, as legislators here, that we do provide safe environments for our children in the school system.

I want to congratulate and thank every member of this Legislature for this past May, when we passed Ryan's Law, which provided safe schools for our students. It not only allowed them to carry inhalers on them at all times with their parents' permission, but it also created an educational awareness program for all staff—teachers, janitors, bus drivers—and ensured that the principal has a document on file ensuring that anybody coming in to teach that child has specific information and reference to knowing that that child has asthma, and they know what to do in case of an emergency. So I really do want to thank each and every one of the MPPs here who supported my bill, Ryan's Law, and got that into effect.

This fall, with the help of the Ontario Lung Association, they've been working hard to disseminate the infor-

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LUNG HEALTH

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I rise today, the final day of Lung Month, to welcome members of the Ontario Lung Association to the Legislature, who are here to meet with MPPs at their annual lobby day at Queen's Park.

I commend the Lung Association and all of their partners for their hard work in preventing lung disease and promoting better lung health. Today provides us with an excellent opportunity to connect and discuss our shared goal of realizing a healthier Ontario.

I would also like to thank them once again for all their support in helping us to pass the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2015, an important piece of legislation that we know will help to reduce lung disease for generations to come.

The passage of the act marked the next step forward in our government's efforts to move even closer to a truly smoke-free Ontario. I'm proud to say that we have already made much progress on reducing smoking in Ontario. Between 2000 and 2014, Ontario's smoking rate dropped from 24.5% to 17.4%, which equals approximately 408,000 fewer smokers in Ontario.

But we know that we need to continue to take active steps to protect young people from the health risks and impacts of smoking. The Making Healthier Choices Act does exactly that. It provides for an increase in the maximum fines for those who sell tobacco to youth, making Ontario's maximum fines among the highest in Canada.

It bans the sale of flavoured tobacco products, which come in a wide variety of flavours that appeal to young people, and it takes steps to regulate the fast-growing market for e-cigarettes here in Ontario. There are still a lot of questions about whether e-cigarettes are less harmful than traditional cigarettes, and there still is not sufficient evidence to determine for certain one way or another. But we do know that e-cigarettes are appealing to young people. That is why our government has taken a precautionary approach in regulating e-cigarettes. We're protecting our young people from the potential risks until we know more.

mation and create the tools needed in our educational system in order to ensure this bill is a success. Again, thank you very much to the Lung Association for having done that.

I also do want to make mention of another bill that's been sitting in the wings, waiting to come forward through the Legislature, and that is a bill by Kathryn McGarry: Bill 41, the Lung Health Act. We as a party have been standing behind that act. We are in no way creating any barriers to bringing that through committee. We want to hear it come through committee so we can further enhance the lives of people with lung disease in our province. I'm sure the Lung Association is 100% behind it. We will take forward any great idea that this government has to offer and support it, and this is one of those ideas we would like to see come forward. We hope the member from Cambridge's bill is seen shortly so we can institute another lung-positive bill in this Legislature through working together, ensuring that we have consulted with one another and bringing out the best bill possible.

Mr. Speaker, I do have to point out this government at this time—I'm thankful for what they have done with regard to helping improve the lives of people with lung health, but I do have to make mention that this government has to take the time and do the proper consultations and stop making changes behind closed doors.

We saw a reference of that last week when the government made a regulation change allowing the vaping of medical marijuana without really dealing and concentrating and consulting with the various stakeholders. They realized their mistake. They realized they shouldn't be making decisions behind closed doors. They realized that they need to start consulting, and they pulled that regulation back. I hope they have learned their lesson and, going forward, as we bring forward the Lung Health Act down the road, that there's consultation with all stakeholders before we make the necessary changes so that we can have an Ontario that we are proud of, and an Ontario that breathes easier.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is always a pleasure to welcome members of the Lung Association to Queen's Park. They are a breath of fresh air, if you would excuse the pun. They are always very interesting to listen to.

This morning, I had the pleasure to meet with Carole Madeley, who is a registered respiratory therapist. Her dad is a well-known businessman in my riding, so it was nice to connect with her. She works for the Lung Association. I also met with Sherry Zarins. Sherry is the director, health promotion and public education, also with the Lung Association. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

They came, they were prepared, and they were well-informed. They had five "asks," Speaker, and I will go through all five of them.

The first one is an ask that I think the provincial government, the Liberal government, should be quite open to: It would be to pass a bill by one of their members.

The bill is quite simple. It asks for a lung health working group to be established. But it is the goal of that working group that is most important. The group would be there to develop an Ontario lung health action plan respecting research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease—something that we do not have right now. And it would make sure that the group submits an annual report card with respect to the minister's performance on the different undertakings.

1330

We all know that if we want things to get better, we have to be ready to set goals, to do the work, and then measure ourselves against those goals. This is what their number one ask is, and this is what the private member's bill is all about. I can assure you that the NDP supports this bill, but it is up to the government to decide what bill is actually talked about in committee. Right now, this committee sits idle. It could do the work quite easily. I hope they will listen to the Lung Association and move ahead with that.

Their number two ask was to have additional certified respiratory educators, a bit based on the model of the diabetes network that we have in Ontario. If you ask any primary care providers—it doesn't matter if they're solo fee-for-service, if they work in community health centres, family health teams, a nurse-practitioner-led clinic, an aboriginal health access centre—they all have people with COPD, they all have people with asthma, and they all treat people, unfortunately, with lung cancer.

What the respiratory therapist could do is set up a program with those people to help them self-manage these diseases. The more you empower patients with chronic diseases, the better the outcome will be for that person, for their family and for the health care system. Every time a COPD patient gets into a problem and gets admitted through emergency, thousands of dollars are spent trying to get them better. It is a whole lot easier to educate them so they can take charge of their own health and make sure that they manage their disease, and this is what they would like to do. It is a small ask—it is in the millions of dollars—but the ratio is that for every \$2 that you invest, you get \$100 back, so 50 to 1. It's the kind of investment that everybody would dream of, if you could get those kind of returns.

The third ask is a pulmonary rehabilitation service. Once you know you have the disease, there is still secondary prevention that can be done so that you get as healthy as possible, you get your respiratory system as healthy as possible and you maintain an exercise routine within your capabilities. Everybody can progress. If you give them the right support, if you give them the right rehab program, they do get better, and then have the maintenance in place so that they keep this.

I see that time is running away.

Ensure that spirometry is done within primary health care settings. It's a very, very cheap little test that people could do and it tells you an awful lot about how your lung health is doing. As well, provide access to what are called valved holding chambers. You know those little puffers? We've all seen them. Ventolin is a very common

one that kids with asthma use. There's a little chamber so that you don't have to coordinate pushing and taking a breath at the same time. Make those more available. They're \$50 apiece; some families just can't afford them.

Well put together—thank you for coming to Queen's Park. It was a pleasure to talk to you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list draw of October 5, 2015, for private members' public business such that Ms. Scott assumes ballot item number 15 and Mr. Pettapiece assumes ballot item number 56.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

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

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

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

"To immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I fully support, will sign my name and send it to the desk with page Noam.

NEWBORN HEALTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: Midwives held a press conference this morning. They also wanted to table over 1,400 names on a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Health Protection and Promotion Act ... calls for the mandatory administration of erythromycin ointment as a prophylactic agent into the eyes of all newborns and specifies that the Health Care Consent Act ... does not apply to the prevention or treatment of communicable diseases of the eyes of the newborn;

"Whereas research evidence shows that the administration of erythromycin is ineffective at preventing infection;

"Whereas the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Association of Ontario Midwives call for the rescinding of the mandatory ocular prophylaxis laws;

They ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, "That the Health Protection and Promotion Act be amended to remove the forced administration of ophthalmic ointment."

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

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that's addressed 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 that 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, will affix my name and send it to the table with page Prasanna.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

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

“(1) Reverse the cuts to health care;
 “(2) Return to the bargaining table with the OMA (Ontario Medical Association) to resume negotiations for a fair physician services agreement;
 “(3) Work with all front-line health care provider groups to develop plans to create a sustainable health care system for the people of Ontario.”

It's signed by a number of constituents, and I agree with it as well.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that is signed by a number of physicians who live in my riding of London West. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

1340

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to the page Prasanna to take to the table.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I’m reading a petition that’s addressed 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 that 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, Mr. Speaker, and affix my signature to it.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with health care, signed by people from South River, Huntsville and Gravenhurst. It reads:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

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

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I sign this petition and hand it to Brooke.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition that came from the people of the northeast and Mrs. Bonnie Houle, from Hanmer, in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, 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 fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and ask Megan Faith to bring it to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas some establishments have instituted unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners;

“Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living;

“Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to their positive experience;

“Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage compared to those owners who use tips and gratuities to pad their margins;

“Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees’ tips;

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

“That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees’ Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees.”

I support it, will sign it and send it to the desk with Jack.

NEWBORN HEALTH

Mr. Todd Smith: I’d like to present this petition with over 1,400 names gathered by the Ontario Midwives. I’d like to give special credit to Liza van de Hoef, a Quinte midwife, for spearheading this effort.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Health Protection and Promotion Act ... calls for the mandatory administration of erythromycin ointment as a prophylactic agent into the eyes of all newborns and specifies that the Health Care Consent Act ... does not apply to the prevention or treatment of communicable diseases of the eyes of the newborn;

“Whereas research evidence shows that the administration of erythromycin is ineffective at preventing infection;

“Whereas the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Association of Ontario Midwives call for the rescinding of the mandatory ocular prophylaxis laws;

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

“That the Health Protection and Promotion Act be amended to remove the forced administration of ophthalmic ointment.”

I will sign this and send it to the table with page Aaran.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario called “Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization.” It reads as follows:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don’t have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

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

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario’s Hydro One.”

I couldn’t agree more with this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Lauren to take to the table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It’s entitled “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.” I especially thank dentist Dr. Lisa Bentley of Mississauga for having sent that and many, many others like it along.

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’m pleased to sign and support this petition, and send it down with page Ross.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I regret to inform the House that the time for petitions today has expired.

1350

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes / Projet de loi 144, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter ou à modifier d’autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 26, 2015, I’m now required to put the question.

Mr. Sousa has moved second reading of Bill 144, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact or amend certain other statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I’ve received a request from the chief government whip asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes, pursuant to standing order 28(h).

Second reading vote deferred.

POLICE RECORD CHECKS REFORM ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RÉFORME DES VÉRIFICATIONS DE DOSSIERS DE POLICE

Mr. Balkissoon, on behalf of Mr. Naqvi, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks / Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de dossiers de police.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Scarborough–Rouge River.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak on the third reading debate of Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015.

At its core, this legislation is about two things. It’s about protecting people’s civil liberties and it’s about keeping our communities safe. The Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015, if passed, will create clear, consistent and comprehensive rules on how police record checks are requested, conducted and disclosed for the first time in our province’s history.

I want to repeat that because that point is really important: This proposed legislation will be the first set of clear, comprehensive and consistent rules around the disclosure of police record checks.

These reforms will address and remove unnecessary barriers to employment, volunteering, education and other community opportunities while protecting community safety and vulnerable persons by ensuring that employers have all necessary information.

This legislation covers a lot of ground, but at its heart it does three things.

The first would standardize the three types of record checks that could be requested in Ontario. They are (1) a criminal record check; (2) a criminal record and judicial matters check; and (3) a vulnerable sector check.

The second is that it will ensure that individuals receive a copy of their record and have an opportunity to review it prior to its release. It will also give individuals the opportunity to request that a decision to disclose certain types of records be reconsidered.

Third, it will ensure that those who have a record check for non-criminal reasons, such as an interaction under the Mental Health Act, will no longer be disclosed.

This legislation is the result of a broad collaboration with our policing, civil liberty, business, non-profit and mental health partners, who provided valuable input to help us develop a fair and effective framework and many of whom came to speak in favour of the legislation during public hearings. These groups knew that reforms were needed.

I’m pleased that our government is taking leadership and bringing forward meaningful change with respect to police record checks. This legislation is based upon the 2014 Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and Law Enforcement and Records (Managers) Network—LEARN—guideline. The guideline was developed in consultation with and has been endorsed by key partners, including the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Canadian Civil Liberties Association, Canadian Mental Health Association Ontario, the John Howard Society of Ontario and many others.

During public hearings and debate, we’ve heard about many Ontarians who have faced unnecessary barriers because of inappropriate disclosure of non-conviction and non-criminal information in their police record checks. Through reports from organizations, such as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the John Howard Society of Ontario, we’ve heard about people who learned, during routine record checks, that their records included non-criminal conduct they had with police.

In some cases, the record resulted from the individual experiencing a mental health crisis; in others, they were victims or simply witnesses to a crime. In many cases, individuals were denied employment, had their education placed in jeopardy, were denied access to their chosen vocations or lost out on other important opportunities. Minister Naqvi stressed that point in his presentation to the Legislature during second reading. He stated that this legislation, if passed, will respond to the clear concerns raised by a large number of key stakeholders, and that it will do so in a manner that reflects the recommendations and best advice that we received from these stakeholders.

These unnecessary barriers could not continue. In July 2014, the Premier gave clear direction to Minister Naqvi in his mandate letter to address the privacy issues surrounding police record checks and indicated that background checks must be conducted in a fair and consistent manner across the province. Moreover, for individual Ontarians, it would mean that the protection of their civil liberties and privacy by limiting the disclosure of certain non-conviction information and prohibiting the release of non-criminal information.

I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the members of the public and partner organizations who participated in the process of moving this bill forward through second reading and their thoughtful presentations at the standing committee, and my fellow committee members. I must also say a special word of thanks to my colleagues in the House for their constructive and helpful participation in the debate as the legislation has moved forward.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would begin to address systemic barriers to economic opportunities for individuals, such as education and employment, created by the inappropriate disclosure of non-conviction and non-criminal information in police record checks. It will also minimize the incidence of police record check information being released to a third party without the consent of the individual. It will standardize the way police record checks are conducted, resulting in faster screening decisions and fewer opportunities lost.

The proposed legislation has the strong support of a range of stakeholders, including the police sector, civil liberties groups, the private sector, the non-profit sector, labour groups, the justice sector and the health sector. Mr. Speaker, we've consulted widely. We have listened and we incorporated the input and advice of our multiple stakeholders into the proposed Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015. I am honoured to support its adoption in this House and I recommend to my colleagues that they also do the same.

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

1400

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity this afternoon to speak in third reading to Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks. I note that the bill has been to committee and that there were people who came before it.

We did have some amendments that were put forward that weren't adopted. In particular, I know that our member for Dufferin—Ms. Jones's riding—had put forward Bill 79, An Act respecting criminal record checks for volunteers, and there was an amendment to incorporate that private member's bill into this bill. Unfortunately, that wasn't accepted, although, from what I understand, it may be incorporated somehow in the regulations.

In my riding, probably the biggest issue I've had with regard to police record checks has been just the timeliness of it, particularly when someone is applying for a job and they need the record check in order to be able to get the job. Often, the police forces are inundated with them or they don't have the manpower to be able to deal with it. I'm not sure what the reason is, but it can take a fair length of time, and often that creates a real problem for the people who are either applying for a job or perhaps just applying to coach a hockey team or volunteer in some sector. So that's been the big issue that has been coming up.

Our critic, the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, pointed out in his initial speech that the demand for record checks has gone up tremendously. In fact, he cited that in Toronto last year, there were 110,000 police record checks asked for. That's an increase of some 92% in the past five years. That's a huge increase, so I think the issue of having enough resources to be able to deal with it is significant and I hope the government does deal with it, because it can be a real problem.

The private member's bill put forward by my colleague Ms. Jones, Bill 79, was trying to deal with that situation and also with the cost for individuals who just want to volunteer in terms of getting a police record check. What her bill was going to allow was that if you got one police record check, then you could use it for five different organizations, essentially. From her private member's bill, I note that in the explanatory note it says, "When a police force releases a criminal record check for a volunteer, whether to an organization or to the volunteer, the police force is required to release a maximum of five additional originals of the check to the volunteer at no additional charge if the volunteer so requests."

I think that makes a lot of sense because often you have situations, it seems, where volunteers volunteer for many different organizations. I think we need to do things that are going to encourage volunteering, not put roadblocks in the way for people to volunteer. I think that's something that makes sense. I hope the government incorporates the spirit of that bill through regulations to make it easier for our volunteers.

Certainly, while we're on the topic of volunteers, I do want to highlight just how important they are in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. I see, I think, what we all see in the job of being MPP: the fantastic work done around our communities by volunteers. Often, they do have to apply if they want to coach a hockey team or be a trainer for a hockey team or—I'm thinking about all of the activities my kids were involved with—help out with

Scouts, or they want to volunteer for even something perhaps like the agricultural societies. They often will require a check.

This Bill 113 is about putting in a province-wide framework for police record checks, and it is something that our party supports and feels is necessary, because right now, different organizations do different things. Bill 113 would require province-wide standards and rules for police record checks.

It would create three different types for the release of records. The first one would be a criminal record check, which is criminal convictions and findings of guilt under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. So that's sort of the simplest form.

Number two would be criminal record and judicial matters checks, or a criminal record check plus outstanding charges, arrest warrants, certain judicial orders, absolute discharges, conditional discharges and other records, as authorized by the Criminal Records Act.

The third, and certainly the most in-depth, would be a vulnerable sector check. This is a criminal record check and judicial matters check, plus findings of not criminally responsible due to mental disorder, record suspensions or pardons related to sexually based offences, and non-conviction information related to the predation of a child or other vulnerable person—that is to say, charges that were withdrawn, dismissed or stayed, or that resulted in acquittal. Obviously, that's the most in-depth record check for those working in sectors where there are vulnerable persons involved.

This bill would create more standards. It also allows for more protection for the individual, because it really is a balance between individuals' rights and protecting society. I think it's moving in the right direction. Certainly, it's something that I think we can support, and hopefully it's going to make it better for our volunteers who are trying to do a good job around our ridings.

I'm going to wrap up shortly, but I did want to just mention some of the fantastic volunteers we do have around the riding. I get to see them at the annual awards for volunteers. I think of Peter Daleman up in Parry Sound. I bumped into him on the street a month or so ago. He was driving from helping Habitat for Humanity build a new house, on his way to the Georgian Nordic ski trails, where there had been a break-in; he was responding to it to look after that. These people do such a great job.

A place where a record check would be used, I'm sure, is in victim assistance programs—VCARS. I know that Fran Coleman up in Huntsville is a volunteer there, and a wonderful person to do that—so compassionate. That is a service that really helps in Parry Sound–Muskoka. I raised a question just a month or so ago about the fact that they've had a tremendous increase in their workload but their funding has not kept track with that. Or in the Girl Guides—I run into Mary Jane Campbell in Magnetawan quite often. She has been involved for years and years and years in Girl Guides, and that's another place, I'm sure, that would be requiring a medical check.

Of course, all MPPs these days seem to spend most of our time in parades on weekends. I know it was three Santa Claus parades for me on the weekend: Huntsville on Friday night, Gravenhurst on Saturday morning and Parry Sound on Saturday afternoon. They have so many volunteers. My good friend Peter Holsgrove is working hard these days on the Rotary float for the upcoming Bracebridge Rotary Santa Claus Parade that's going to be happening this Sunday.

My other good friend Don MacKay, who always has a Lions guide dog with him and has for about the past 10 years—we all see these service clubs and the great work that they do around the riding. I think the first year I was elected, in the little village of Magnetawan, the Lions Club had just finished building a brand new outdoor skating rink, with a roof over top of it and a warm room to keep the Zamboni so they'd be able to flood the ice. It was a Lions Club of no more than about 20 people that built the whole thing, and there were probably 500 people out at that event.

It's important that we protect our volunteers and we make it easy for them to do the great work that they are able to participate in. I think this bill, Bill 113, is an improvement. It sets standards. It also protects an individual where there's information that is not a criminal record but in the current system might get released and might affect their ability to volunteer or get a job. There will now be these three layers of protection.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 113, and I shall close.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to stand again in this Legislature and share my thoughts today for the third reading of Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015. This is a bill that is in response to many personal and very public cases of unfair use of police non-conviction records that have had devastating effects on the lives of individuals across the province. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this is now—well, I guess this is my third opportunity to speak to this bill. I will tell you that I'm only among three of my caucus colleagues who ever had this chance, because it had been time-allocated. So I'm glad to be able to, again, but anyway, I'm always pleased for a full opportunity to debate.

1410

So what are we talking about? This bill was born out of public concern for the unfair disclosure of non-conviction records. Many people have been needlessly denied opportunities in their adult lives as an unfair result of police record checks that turned up a record of something that did not result in a conviction, and that information would end up in a police check. People who have sought housing, employment, volunteer opportunities or opportunities of self-improvement have actually been denied those opportunities because of a negative and unfair surprise on a police record check.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you know this, but we live in a society built on the presumption of innocence, and so

here we have the opportunity to address a challenge to that presumption, and when we find that the presumption of innocence is not—when we’re missing that somewhere, it’s great to be able to target it and address it. Whether we’re talking about street checks or non-conviction records disclosure, we have to challenge the framework, and re-establish and reaffirm our commitment to justice and privacy and freedom to equitably participate in our communities.

A little bit of background: Police record checks are routinely used and required in the non-profit sector, so individuals who want to volunteer or who are looking for employment opportunities are routinely required to have police record checks done. Incidentally, these record checks can be quite expensive, but more on that later. These record checks are done through the Canadian Police Information Centre, or CPIC, database. If people want to volunteer, they need a record check. If people are applying for a job, they request a record check. If someone needs to finish a program for post-secondary education and they have to do a placement, they might need a record check.

When a record check is done, as it stands now, the release of information disclosed through the record checks is not limited to records of conviction. In fact, it may, and routinely does, include non-conviction records. Non-conviction records—I’ll focus in on records of interactions or something that does not result in a conviction or even charges—are what we’re talking about here. So when we look at what it means, it’s all contact with police where a record is taken, including criminal matters before the courts that result in acquittal or where a conviction is to be expunged, or if someone is a witness to an event, or even when someone may be in mental health distress, resulting in police contact. But they are records of something that does not result in a conviction or a charge. These are examples of non-conviction records. When these non-conviction records are disclosed during a routine background check, it can have injurious consequences. That isn’t right, and that is not fair.

Just over a year ago the Toronto Star, as we’ve talked about extensively in this House, ran a series of articles called *Presumed Guilty*. It focused on individuals whose lives had been upset or unfairly affected by non-conviction records coming out in background checks. In May 2014, the Star reported that, “Hundreds of thousands of people are listed in Canada’s national criminal records despite never having been convicted of a crime....

“More than 420,000 people were listed in the RCMP’s Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database as having no conviction in 2005....

“Many of them are listed in the database for mental health issues.

“For example, nearly 2,500 with no conviction registered had a notation for ‘attempt suicide.’ Another 2,200 had a notation for ‘mental instability’ with no conviction.”

Imagine people’s surprise when their travel plans or background checks yielded non-conviction records that

persecuted them for suffering mental health challenges or for records of interactions with police that didn’t result in charges or convictions—surprise. During second reading, I shared some of the personal stories of individuals who were featured in these Toronto Star pieces. I’m not going to go through them all again today, but I am going to remind us of some of the details so that we remember what the whole point of this piece of legislation was: that we remember that there are individuals who have been negatively affected by this. We want to ensure that this piece of legislation actually addresses those problems.

One example, from May 24, 2015, is a woman named Anne. Anne had fled to a women’s shelter because of domestic abuse. Her husband at the time was arrested and charged with assault and threatening death. He filed a complaint against her for allegedly threatening him. At the time, she was told not to worry about it. However, years later, when she applied to be a volunteer at a women’s shelter, she found out that she had a police record indicating that she was suspected of uttering threats.

As she said, “‘Anybody can pick up the phone, dial 911, file a complaint against you and if it goes in the database, you’re stuck with it,’ she says. ‘When I discovered that I had this label for who knows how long, I just couldn’t get my head around it. It boggles my mind. Who came up with this?’”

She was also encouraged to just explain to future employers the circumstances and hope that they believed her. This is one example. This is why we’ve been debating this, I would argue, not long enough, but again, this is a specific example.

Another one: John tried to file a complaint to police about an issue in his life. He was told that he actually had a record himself of violence dating back to 2002. He had no idea what they were talking about. Upon closer inspection, he found out that it was an incident where someone had claimed he had pushed him in an argument. The police had showed up; he explained the situation. There was no arrest; there were no charges. Ten years later, he finds out that it’s listed on police records, suggesting he was charged and convicted.

Another story—and this is one that is receiving wider attention. I’ll come back to how this came up in committee and unfortunately hasn’t been resolved.

Andrew is among thousands of Canadians who names are captured in these databases. Those databases are accessible to US border authorities. When Andrew was trying to travel for business, he was asked if he had ever been convicted of possessing narcotics. He had not, but when he was in high school there was an interaction with police, who charged them all with smoking something that they shouldn’t. That narcotics charge was dismissed in court. However, the record was never removed from police computers. He wasn’t able to go on his business trip.

I think people are familiar as well—one of the earlier stories in that series was Ellen, who was prevented from going on a March of Dimes cruise because a US border

agent said she was hospitalized for mental health issues back in 2012.

People have no idea what a police record might include. Records are very common, and they are disclosed without discretion. So there are very real concerns about the information kept in these records serving as a deterrent to seeking police help or involvement. If community members knew that by even interacting with the police there would be a resulting record, and that could potentially mean they couldn't get a job, volunteer or pursue a goal, it might make them stop and think twice about interacting in the first place.

Imagine a situation of crisis or distress. When an individual is in distress or in danger, we as a society would hope that they would reach out to the proper authorities or emergency services if needed. However, if someone knows that there are going to be repercussions, are they going to dial 911? If someone is wanting to support a loved one or a family member—wait, loved ones can be family members, can't they?—and to reach out and call the authorities if that person is in danger or in crisis, that individual shouldn't stop and go, "Hold on, what if they one day want to volunteer?", or, "What if one day they want to do a placement?" We should have a society where people run to help, not away from it.

Certainly, people who find themselves in medical distress or facing mental health challenges should not be captured under police record checks.

1420

Sometimes people need help. Sometimes they find themselves connecting with police when they are in distress or when they're suffering a mental health or emotional crisis. As I've said, any record of this interaction should not be accessible by prospective employers or anyone else—certainly not by US border guards. In fact, I would say non-conviction records are none of anyone's business—with those very specific exceptions that we discussed in committee, the most extreme cases connected to child welfare. You know what? I'm going to come back to that health records being accessed by US border officials.

Here's another example: Nadia from this Toronto Star piece was at the Detroit border and was stopped to go in for questioning. She realized that it was from an incident eight years prior from a 911 call during a troubled time in her life. As she said, "I eventually found out I was flagged because of what they called contact with police. I had no idea what they were talking about. Then I figured out they were looking at my 911 call. I was humiliated and stunned that some American border guard could access my personal health information. It's obscene."

I'm sure there are a number of people in this Legislature, and people across the province, who are, one day, going to consider crossing a border, who might travel for business or travel with family, and for them to be faced with that kind of personal privacy violation and surprise isn't something that we should allow to happen.

When it comes to mental health, we must support Ontarians, not vilify or persecute them. We don't accept

a system of persecution without prosecution, but this piece we find is exactly that. As I said, we want a system where Ontarians can connect with police, as needed, and they won't regret it for the rest of their lives.

This issue doesn't only affect those seeking employment or volunteer opportunities. Students who are hoping to graduate from post-secondary education can find themselves unable to graduate because they are barred from completing a placement because of a non-conviction report. Schools might have a privacy policy that prevents a school from investigating or delving into specifics when it comes to these disclosures, so there's never any room to manoeuvre, and these records preclude students from participating in some placements, which means, then, that they wouldn't be able to complete their program. They may have invested years, they may have invested time—well, obviously, time and years—but also money in their education to get almost to the finish line, and be told that they can't complete it due to a non-conviction record. Obviously, it's something that we're pleased is being addressed by this piece of legislation.

Both the John Howard Society of Ontario and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association have written reports on non-conviction records. They, among others, were at committee to come and share their thoughts, their concerns and their suggestions. They call for tighter control and for information to be withheld except in cases of significant threat to public safety. According to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, one in three Canadians are thought to have some form of non-conviction record just hanging out in police computers. So we're glad this legislation will address some of their concerns.

Some groups that have organized against police non-conviction records disclosure include those who have been working for police record checks reform through the Police Records Check Coalition. Groups including the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario; the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario; the Canadian Civil Liberties Association; the John Howard Society of Ontario and the Ontario Association of Patient Councils have positioned against the disclosure of non-conviction police records.

Many of these groups presented during committee and shared their concerns with us and with the government. They shared their concerns, their suggestions and their ideas. I want to say that I really value committee work. It is when we get to hear from Ontarians. It's when we get to learn from those who are living and working in the province who have to live and work under legislation that may or may not make their lives better or easier.

Here, we have an important bill—a really, really important bill. I want to talk a little bit about what happened or what didn't happen in committee. As I mentioned earlier, Ontarians' personal and health information can surprise them at the airport. Their personal and health information can be used against them by American border authorities or foreign authorities because they have access to the CPIC and CIPC databases.

The NDP moved an amendment to protect this information and proposed that, and I'll use the exact language

here, “a police record check provider shall not, in response to a police record check request, disclose any information about an individual that is contained in a special interest police entry in a Canadian Police Information Centre database or another police database maintained by a police service in Canada, to a government in Canada or in a foreign country, or to any agencies of that government, except as may be relevant to an active police investigation.” That was our proposed amendment, and this would have remedied the situation where personal health information is available cross-jurisdictionally. This would have strengthened the bill.

This issue of travel and personal information coming out at the border is a very public one; it was very well covered by media. Yet this government not only didn’t support the amendment, but they didn’t even seem to support it in spirit.

My colleague the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton also proposed an amendment to the exceptional disclosure process. He proposed that a judge, a fair and impartial third party, conduct a review of the provider’s determination and decide whether all of the criteria have been satisfied. Essentially, a judge would weigh evidence and make the determination of whether or not criteria are satisfied, rather than have it be left to the discretion of those who hold the non-conviction records. The government again said no.

Again and again we heard during committee—we also read it in the submissions—that the cost of obtaining a police record check can keep some of our community members from volunteering or from applying for employment. We heard ideas around costs of checks and the number of copies that could be given to someone requesting them. In fact, I will refer here to the summary of recommendations put together by legislative research on Bill 113.

As they have said, some organizations require annual screenings. Many people have limited incomes, and these checks can represent a financial burden as well as an economic barrier to full participation. The recommendation from stakeholders was that Bill 113 should address the subject of costs.

Also, it was suggested that there be a set standard fee, or a fee waiver in cases made by low-income individuals, students, seniors and volunteers.

There were questions about the length of validity of these record checks.

There were concerns that Bill 113 should not have the effect of driving up the cost of police record checks, that that be ensured. One idea was that eligible non-profit organizations should have a separate program to cover the costs of these police record checks.

There were a number of suggestions, a number of recommendations that we certainly hope the government will consider when it comes to regulations. We heard in submissions that costs are prohibitive. However, the government rejected opposition amendments to address this, opting to handle it in regulations, as I said. I don’t really know what I think about this “in regulations” part,

Speaker, because in this case, why put off until tomorrow what we could have meaningfully addressed today?

Just to recap, the NDP wanted to protect health records from outside authorities, and the government? Nope. The opposition called for multiple checks for the price of one, and the government said no.

The whole impetus for this act really did seem to come from the public. The Star series of articles drew the public’s attention to this matter, which needs to be addressed, but for crying out loud, we’re not addressing it. Mental health records should not be police records. Personal and private health information should not keep someone from going to Disneyland or from travelling across the border for work or for any reason.

That was the public understanding of the reason for this bill. There are many other parts, as we have talked about, but that was one publicly understood reason for this bill, and it isn’t being addressed.

1430

This bill was supposed to protect an individual’s privacy and rights. It was supposed to restrict sharing of personal and private information. It does, in most instances, but it doesn’t go far enough. It was supposed to protect people, but it isn’t protecting their privacy and information the way it could and the way it should.

Another opposition amendment sought to remove a part of the original legislation that would require that there not be any prosecution under this act without the minister’s consent. The government rejected that, too. They’re essentially preventing people from seeking a remedy. If an individual’s rights are violated and there is potential reason to prosecute under this act, the government says, “Well, maybe, but only with the minister’s consent.” What? This is a bill addressing civil liberties and privacy, so we need to do it right. We need to protect people, with or without the minister’s consent.

Mr. Speaker, we support this bill. As I said earlier, we need to challenge the framework and re-establish and reaffirm our commitment to justice, privacy and freedom, so that everyone can participate fully and fairly in our communities and in their own futures. We believe in safe communities where people participate freely. Sometimes they make mistakes; sometimes they’re in the wrong place at the wrong time. People should be able to participate freely, as we said. We want communities to communicate with police, and we would hope that, when they do, those records can’t come back to haunt them.

This is a solid piece of legislation; it’s very important. But, as I’ve pointed out, there were opportunities in committee to strengthen it, to really get to the heart of the whole reason that we’re bringing this forward: protecting civil liberties and privacy. There were some missed opportunities. Putting things off until regulation was, again, a missed opportunity. We had suggestions on the table that we could have adopted during the committee process.

As always, I challenge the government to really put its money where its mouth is: If you want to have a strong bill, make it strong. As I said, I was one of three people

in my caucus to speak to this bill, because of time allocation. While I'm glad to have had that opportunity, rushing a process, especially when we're talking about fundamental civil liberties—privacy, sensitive mental health information—that's not a process to rush. In committee, when we hear from people and disregard some of their concerns, again, that's not a process we want to embrace. Rather than have halfway measures, let's make them the best they could have been to strengthen this bill.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak again to this bill.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I also welcome the opportunity to join this debate on Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act. As we know, the bill strikes out terms like “criminal reference check” and “record check” and substitutes the term “police record check.” So, we’ve changed the language and, going forward, technically or linguistically, we don’t call for a “criminal background check” for somebody who wants to work in a bank. However, if this law passes, as I understand it, that still remains the case. The words are changed; that’s about it.

The act, as we know, authorizes police forces to conduct three kinds of police record checks: criminal record checks—even though we don’t call them that now—criminal record and judicial matters checks, and vulnerable sector checks.

As we discuss this proposed legislation, I do stress that the PC caucus supports the rights of all Ontarians to be treated fairly and to be treated equally. Everyone is to be treated equally before the law in our society, although there is an exception I have witnessed over a number of years, and that would be Caledonia.

It is also important for people to understand that this bill is not about carding. Our daily paper last month had a good article on the issue of carding. Keith Leslie, actually, of The Canadian Press explained that the new regulation would ban the random stopping of citizens by police and require officers to provide a written record of any exchanges. Reading this article on the weekend, it says that Community Safety Minister Naqvi indicated that the draft regulations would establish clear and consistent rules to protect civil liberties during voluntary interactions between police and the public. He indicated in this article that the government heard from many people of colour—that’s how it was described in the newspaper article—and aboriginal men and women who said that the Human Rights Code was being ignored by police who stopped them for no apparent reason. He says that police will not be allowed to stop people based on how they look or which neighbourhood they live in. Again, this was not the case over a number of years in the Caledonia Six Nations incident.

I’m quite heartened by Bill 113. One of the main objectives is to establish standards right across Ontario and establish province-wide rules when it comes to police record checks. As I have indicated, Speaker, we do support the right for all Ontarians to be treated fairly and

equitably. We support this legislation because it brings consistency to police record checks. It’s based on recommendations of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, amongst other groups.

However, as I indicated, over nine years—and the media reported on this consistently—we had an issue of two-tiered justice. This was in Caledonia. In fact, the president of the OPP Association, Karl Walsh, was the one who termed that phrase, “two-tier justice,” during a media interview in June 2006. His concern was that so many officers and citizens were being injured unnecessarily in Caledonia. There was a two-tier system, and in spite of what we do here, it was not a fair and equitable administration of the law.

So here we had the president of the union, representing something like 7,500 OPP officers, and he indicated in the Caledonia stand-off that there was one law for aboriginal people and another for everyone else in the province. As he said, “Our concern is basically that there is a two-tier justice system.” This was a reference in the Toronto Sun, June 16, 2006. I looked this up in a book written by Gary McHale. Actually, I’ll give you the title of the book. It’s Victory in the No-Go Zone: Winning the Fight Against Two-Tier Policing. I sincerely believe that this legislation, Bill 113, as with that carding regulation, is a step in the right direction to try and eliminate this kind of approach—and I’m colour-blind when it comes to race—that makes a distinction with respect to race. Legislation has no business being involved in that, and the enforcement of legislation has no business being involved in racial differences.

I’d like to quote Walsh again. This is in a book by Christie Blatchford entitled Helpless. “I still don’t understand why we took different approaches to law enforcement in Caledonia. I don’t think I’ll ever understand it. I’ve never been given an adequate explanation as to why that occurred.” He goes on to say, “I can’t forgive them for a lot of the approaches they took to this and I think numerous officers got unnecessarily injured, I think everybody that was involved in this suffered injuries that could have been [avoided] had they just stuck to their training, stuck to their policies and stuck to the law.”

Here we are, Speaker, debating, creating a new law, an amended law, and I sincerely hope that this law is followed through as to its original intent.

1440

Walsh concluded by saying, “You know, the law doesn’t discern colour of skin or ethnic background, and it’s not supposed to. Justice is supposed to be blind.” I think we all agree with this. However, under certain circumstances that has not been the case, and Caledonia has shown that repeatedly.

There’s reference as well to our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a reference that it’s merely words on a piece of paper and can be destroyed at will by the very people sworn to uphold the law. We have a system—and I’m referring to what Walsh is talking about—where our

leaders act in way that is beneficial to society, but in Caledonia—and again, this comes from Christie Blatchford's book—police officers became pawns.

I am pro-OPP in this case. I witnessed it time and time again. In my view, the OPP became pawns of the higher-ups, be they politicians or perhaps senior administration in the OPP.

I'll wrap up by quoting Christie Blatchford: "Caledonia is all about the absolute failure of the system to protect average people—a failure that is rooted in a race-based approach to policing and public policy." I remain confident that this legislation dealing with police record checks will ensure that this cannot be misused.

As many, I've had challenges in our constituency office. A gentleman came in just a week or two ago. He was actually quite upset. He wanted to go to Simcoe for his record check. He's from Haldimand county. The reason he needed a record check: What he does right now is he plays the role of Santa Claus. He knows he's got to be fingerprinted; it would make life for him a lot easier just to go to Simcoe. It's a little closer. He was turned down. He has to go to Cayuga, wait a few days, then go back to Simcoe again.

I don't know whether children are watching this afternoon, but I can tell you that Santa Claus was in my office, and by his use of language, I could tell that he was very, very angry.

It suggests to me as well that with this legislation, we've got to get the regulations straight. We have to ensure that the system can be as streamlined as possible to make sure we don't have these kinds of overly bureaucratic, cumbersome roles. I'm referring to rural areas, where, instead of going to the nearest OPP detachment—that may be in the county you don't live in, but it's a lot closer—you have to go to a detachment in your particular county. You may not be working in that county. Again, anything that can be done—and I know this goes beyond the legislation—to make sure that this legislation is carried through as simply and easily as possible.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House to talk about various issues and, today, to talk about Bill 113 in this time-allocated debate, An Act respecting police record checks.

We've heard from many speakers here that people are surprised when they need a record check and something comes up that they had long ago forgotten—in many cases, something that came up in their teenage years that they had never been charged with, but it was on the books somewhere. I think this bill recognizes that.

A lot of other members have brought up—and some of those I'm going to bring up as well—other issues with police record checks; for instance, the difficulty in rural areas of actually getting a police records check. We have volunteers who want to help, and in my riding and in many northern ridings and in many other rural ridings, it's not a case of a two-minute drive. It takes a lot of work to get a police record check.

One of my neighbours came over recently. I'm going to use his name in the Legislature—I'll send him to Hansard: Mr. Larry Reeves. He is a neighbour of mine, and he teaches a trapping course to people who want to learn how to trap. It's a noble profession in northern Ontario and a needed profession, and he needs a police record check to do a trapping course. He doesn't have a problem with that, but he needs fingerprints and he has to have new fingerprints each time. His question—maybe our Sergeant-at-Arms can answer this question; he's got a police history. Sorry, Dennis.

His question was: Do the fingerprints change?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Let's hope not.

Mr. John Vanthof: Good response, Minister of Transportation. Let's hope not.

Why does he have to submit new fingerprints each time, at added cost and much more complication? That's his question. You have a volunteer who wants to teach young people or adults or whoever wants to learn—in most cases, young people—how to do something that's an age-old tradition, and to do it humanely and respectfully, and he's asked for new fingerprints every three years. Really, does that make any sense at all?

To put this in perspective, could you imagine how all our TV shows—CSI—would do if, at the end, "Sorry, the fingerprints are outdated. So we're done"? It just doesn't work that way. Why do you put a volunteer through that extra grief? We can chuckle about it here, but for those people it is a big issue, and it's a big issue in rural Ontario because we all know that we have a dedicated group of volunteers—I'm sure every community has—but the harder you make it to volunteer, eventually those people get fed up, and I don't blame them.

I think it's a good opportunity, now that we're talking about police record checks in this House, to bring this issue up. One of the great things about being a representative of my constituency is that when the time presents itself, you bring these issues up. Someone out there in the bureaucracy should explain to the members of this House why you need new fingerprints every three years when you're applying to be a volunteer. Does that make any sense?

In my case, where I had a bit of an alteration to my hand, I could see that. But for most people, their fingerprints don't change. Right away, we should be able to somehow change that for Larry and thousands of people like him who want to help people. There is a purpose why volunteers should have a police record check. There is a purpose for that. It's a screening to make sure there is nothing that could taint their volunteerism in any way—no problem with that. But when you make rules to try to do things that are just nonsensical, we have got to stop that.

Now that I have put Larry's case on the record—hopefully we can move forward with cases like his—I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to have spoken, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is my pleasure to rise today and to speak to third reading of Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, and deliver some remarks on behalf of my PC caucus, especially as the critic for community safety and correctional services. I'd like to start by shining a light on our great province of Ontario, which was, once upon a time, a role model deserving of imitation.

At one time we were an economic powerhouse in this great country. We were once a province envied by others. We possessed a thriving economy, a strong middle class and ample opportunities for growth. Today, we lead North America with the highest energy rates—oh, I shouldn't be smiling on that—a steep unemployment rate and an insurmountable debt resulting from government mismanagement and scandal.

1450

Although I stand alongside everyone here today in support of Bill 113, there are many ways in which this government of the day chooses to do things which are, to put it mildly, irregular. Some may call it innovative, but I think the correct description would be to call it disrespectful to true democratic government policy and procedure. But for now, let's talk about the impacts of this bill, both positive and otherwise.

Bill 113 establishes Ontario as a leader. With this legislation, surprisingly, we will be the first province to establish a standardized framework for all organizations to follow when it comes to police record checks. As a leader, we have the opportunity to do it first, but what is more important is that we do it right.

I'm very disappointed that my fellow MPP Sylvia Jones's very important private member's bill, Bill 79, was defeated. Although the sitting government promised a place in the established framework for her proposal, I don't think this is sufficient. What I do think is that it will end up costing valuable volunteers in this great province who lend their valuable time to more than one worthy organization and cause. Within my constituency alone, the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, I've had numerous complaints about the cost, the term of validity and, even more so, about the inconsistencies in price and information received.

In this current economic atmosphere that Ontario is in, it's seldom that an individual, when seeking employment or a volunteer position, applies for only one position. While it is definitely in their best interest to spread their "eggs" among several baskets, it can be very costly to do so within the existing framework. An average standard police record check costs, usually, between \$15 and \$25, and more and more employers are requiring police record checks as a condition of employment. This process becomes very costly for someone who is already unemployed, underemployed or seeking voluntary work. In committee, the government stated that it was going to be a logistical nightmare to provide additional copies of a police record check document. That was my authoritative voice on behalf of the government.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It sounded like it.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Very good. Thank you very much, Minister of Transportation. You're now on record, so you can leave now.

I'd like to remind the government that it is not the Ministry of Community Safety that is issuing the paperwork, but rather, it is the issuer of a police record check that will be, in fact, providing the additional copies, but only if it is requested when the request for the record check is made.

Where is this nightmare for the government? The police services issuing the records check can just as easily process five copies of the document as they can one. I'm not sure whether the government feels it should not be in the bill itself, but rather, in the regulations. The decision of the government to defeat the motion in committee further delays the implementation of an aspect of the bill that will help our busiest volunteers and Ontarians who are either trying to find employment or who seek better employment to positively impact their lives.

Clearly, it is evident that the state of employment in Ontario is—to put it lightly—depressed. Undoubtedly, Bill 113 will remove some of the unnecessary barriers that people face when securing a job. I do look forward to seeing how the government will implement MPP Jones's bill into the current regulations with the hopes of saving thousands of Ontarians precious time and—might I add—money, as well.

Moreover, the beneficial amendment to exempt the third parties that conduct record checks was also defeated. I believe that the government failed to take into consideration the lapse in time it takes for an individual requesting a police clearance and the amount of time it takes for the actual employer to receive it. The standard amount of time is upwards of four weeks. Third-party organizations have the ability to complete a record check in one day, saving time and grief for both those applying for the job and those screening candidates for a position. Although I'm not surprised the motion was defeated, as it seems to have become a characteristic of this government to micromanage and thus prolong regular, routine matters, evidently the cost of these defeats will undoubtedly come to the forefront as organizations and businesses will be adversely affected by this profound barrier. It would appear that the government is removing employment barriers for some, all the while making it harder for others.

Unlike the government, the Ontario PC Party took the time during the committee process to meet with the National Association of Professional Background Screeners. This is an organization, Speaker, that represents companies that process record checks for some of Canada's top blue-chip corporations and financial institutions; and I might add that some of these companies do work for the Ontario government.

Seeing as the government chose to dismiss their comments in public hearings, I'd like to remind the government of just who the National Association of Professional Background Screeners—or, in short,

NAPBS—is. NAPBS is a voluntary professional association comprised of background screening companies that represent the interests of its members internationally. They have chapters in Asia-Pacific, Canada, Europe and the United States, more than 800 members, and have been in existence for over 12 years. NAPBS's objective is to be the collective voice for the background screening industry. Here in Canada, specifically, they have 21 members who account for delivery of over 90% of the screening that is done in the country. And as I had mentioned earlier, the screening is completed in one day, and most often within just simply a matter of hours.

The types of clients they serve truly span all industries and sectors, serving both for-profit and not-for-profit. Some of their major clients include: retail, financial services, telecommunications, government at all levels, temporary staffing and, of course, logistics. There are literally thousands of clients across Canada and internationally, including names such as: Bell, Loblaw, WestJet, all banks and financial institutions, as well as Walmart and Telus, just to name a few.

NAPBS screens client applicants to ensure their own compliance with governing regulations and to also ensure the safety of their employees, their clients or participants, their assets and their brand integrity. Clients rely on efficiency, expertise and commitment to accuracy of NAPBS, knowing that the checks are conducted by Canadian police services. There is always a need to balance human rights and privacy legislation, an area where NAPBS members provide leading best practices and thoughtful leadership to clients.

Now, there's no question, Speaker, that the volume of criminal record checks has been steadily increasing, whether driven by internal organizational forces, safety concerns or regulatory reasons. The industry anticipates the volume of criminal checks conducted to steadily and continuously increase moving forward.

Due to changes that occurred in the process, the front counters of police departments have been completely inundated with requests for criminal record checks, and many have clearly indicated that this is not a core business they wish to be in. Checks can and do consume significant police resources that are not fully—and often not at all—compensated via the cost of the check. The unintended consequence is unfortunate and inconsistent delays in the delivery of results.

The National Association of Professional Background Screeners is, in fact, Mr. Speaker, a very viable and common alternative for many to process criminal record checks due to the streamlined, efficient, consistent and secure approach that they have. They turn record checks around within hours and their record-keeping standards often exceed the security expectations of others dealing with such sensitive personal information.

1500

It has been noted that the National Association of Professional Background Screeners does not complete any vulnerable sector check requests.

Each screening provider has documented and approved relationships with police forces across Canada,

including a substantial number in Ontario. Each of these business arrangements is, in fact, governed by RCMP policy and executed memorandums of understanding, also known as MOUs, which are in place between the member company, the police service suppliers and the RCMP.

NAPBS has an ongoing productive working relationship with the RCMP, and there is a very healthy respect for their roles and impact on the industry. While they do not speak to all criminal record checks done in Canada, when they are processed through NAPBS members who are bound by a code of conduct and an MOU, the process is consistent with the federal RCMP policy and CPIC—Canadian Police Information Centre—guidelines. This structured relationship, through an MOU, presents important quality checks for security; that is to say, chain of custody, to ensure the applicant cannot manipulate or impact the delivered results.

Section 18 of the RCMP Dissemination of Criminal Record Information policy contains accreditation and quality assessment review requirements for third parties, such as the NAPBS, that must be updated every two years, turning a critical eye to ongoing compliance. The police suppliers are bound to ensure they are following these terms and conditions, because it could potentially impact their ability to access CPIC databases if they are not in compliance with the policy, guidelines and the particular memorandum of understanding.

Speaker, approximately eight million criminal checks are done in Canada a year for non-criminal or civil purposes, such as employment and volunteerism. Just slightly less than three million of these are vulnerable sector verification checks, and of the remaining number, a significant majority is done by the NAPBS, with the remaining minority portion being completed by police front counters. This demonstrates the coverage and impact the National Association of Professional Background Screeners has on the whole.

While we're on the topic of micromanagement, I would also like to state that the government's defeat of the suggested amendment to 19(3), to remove the minister from the decision-making process, also stems from their need to micromanage Ontarians' affairs.

This reminds me of a case that was brought to my attention a few weeks ago of a constituent who, as a personal support worker, was required to have a police record check annually by his employer. However, unfortunately, he shares the same birthday as someone with a criminal past. Although they do not have the same name, nor are they the same person, he was required to have his fingerprints taken and was subjected to additional time-consuming procedures and, yes, monetary costs.

I believe in doing things right the first time. I have a saying, Speaker: When you mess up, you fess up, and then you fix it. While I support this bill and its aim to establish a standardized procedure for all bodies conducting these checks, there are more problems beyond the non-conviction records that would benefit from a

thorough analysis of how the complete process can in fact be improved as a whole.

Again, if our caucus hears a good idea and we think it's the best for Ontario, we will support it regardless of which party brings it forward. But it has to be a good idea, and it has to help Ontarians.

With Ontarians finding it difficult to find meaningful and well-paying work, this legislation will in fact ensure that honest, hard-working and peaceful citizens will be able to succeed without judicial prejudice in their preferred field of employment. And as more and more Ontarians are finding it increasingly difficult to secure meaningful employment, Speaker, I'm confident that this bill will mobilize more Ontarians who are able to work but have faced discrimination due to a past circumstance or situation.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association puts the number of Canadians with a police record as high as one in three. That means that in Ontario there are as many as four million people who have some form of non-conviction record. Many of these people may not even know why they were not accepted for a position that they were fully qualified for. With this legislation, they will be allowed to review their record before it is sent to the prospective employer.

More importantly, they will now have the ability to challenge and request a reconsideration of non-conviction and non-criminal information that their record check contains.

Speaker, in our democratic society we have been taught that "innocent until proven guilty" is the way it should be; however, this ideal has not been upheld across the board. Traditionally, our social understanding of what it means to be "clean" and "safe" has been incongruent with information recorded and shared on police record checks. One of our most fundamental beliefs as Canadians is, in fact, not applicable to this specific arena. Police checks including information related to non-convictions as well as sensitive, personal or medical information is wrong, and I'm glad that we can all agree on that particular issue.

I must, however, note, though, that it's become more increasingly evident that police are being forced to provide services or interventions to individuals experiencing mental health issues. One could understand why it has traditionally been included, even though the release of personal medical information is, in fact, prohibited by law. Essentially, our police officers have been thrown into a role typically reserved for psychologists and/or physicians as they are increasingly ordered to provide relief for the ever-increasing scope of mental health.

I'd also like to take this time to commend the men and women who serve Ontarians as police officers, but I don't believe that they're the ones best suited to handle these issues. Speaker, I am confident and I am sure that they will also agree with me on this issue. Police officers are not psychologists. Having police deal with the overwhelming surge of mental health issues is, in my opinion, just wrong. While many communities have worked

together to implement services and interventions alongside police officers, police should in no way have the ability to disclose these instances in their police record check reports.

Finally, we have an opportunity to put an end to this, and I'm happy that, although we may not all agree on everything, in essence, this bill, Bill 113, is in fact good for Ontarians.

Currently, in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, there are 48 children awaiting a Big Brother or a Big Sister. Like many organizations today who are experiencing a shortage of qualified volunteers, this bill will help to ensure that more and more people are afforded opportunities which were once wrongfully denied to them.

This bill will also afford those who may have incorrect information on their record the opportunity to have it amended.

Overall, this bill is good for society and is good for Ontarians. Yes, Speaker, I, as well as the entire PC caucus, support Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act, despite the fact that many of our amendments to make this bill stronger were defeated in committee.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to take a bit of time on this because it's something that I think most of us would have come across in our constituency offices over the years. I have, unfortunately, had the case where constituents have come to my constituency offices in Hearst, Kapuskasing, Smooth Rock, Timmins, Mattice or Constance Lake, wherever it might be, and complained that something that happened in their past, that might not even have been something that they were charged with, ends up being inside their records. Then, when it comes to them being able to travel abroad—get a passport, leave this country and go into the United States—or maybe try to apply to be bonded for a particular job that they have applied for, that information that's in the record from 15, 20, 30 years ago stays there at times and prevents the person from being able to move on with their lives and do what has to be done.

1510

It was always a difficulty because there was very little in the way of ability to remove that stuff from the record. In some cases, the individuals weren't even convicted. They were pulled over by the police. There was a report that was made. That information ends up in the record somehow or other, and because it's there and a border guard has access to it, let's say in the United States, then all of a sudden that information shows up and becomes a barrier for you to get into the United States. I've actually had people who have called me from the border—not called me personally, but called my constituency office from the border trying to get across.

There was one not that long ago; I guess it was sometime last spring. The person had gotten trained to become a driver of a rig. This gentleman was in his forties at this point, and when he took the training in

order to do what it is that he's got to do, he gets his licence—not a problem; he drives the rig and gets a job. He comes to go across to the States and all of a sudden he essentially got blocked access to go into the United States because something showed up on his police record from the time he was a kid in high school—well, kind of a difficulty. We managed to get it worked out because it was not an issue for which he was convicted. It was only an issue on which he was charged, and eventually it was worked out, but the employer had to allow the rig to be essentially put aside as all of this stuff was worked out. Obviously you don't work this thing out in a day. It took us a couple of days to work our way through it.

This bill, hopefully, would allow us to fix that a little bit better than what it is now as far as being able to have better rules by which the records will indicate if a person was charged and convicted of a particular crime, and also give an ability for the person, once applying for a pardon, or something has been done that they served time for some years ago, to get that information off their record. I know one of the issues that happens at times is that somebody was charged and convicted of a particular crime under the Criminal Code. They serve their time. They do what they have to do, and then after a period of time they apply for a pardon. Until the Conservatives got to power federally, you were able to apply for a pardon and there was actually a chance the pardon would be granted. If you essentially served your time, you didn't cause any trouble, you were not involved in any way with the activity you were charged with in the past, you were able to get a pardon from the federal government in regard to your criminal record.

Again, you end up in a situation where you may have been able to get the pardon, but that information sometimes stayed in the record and then the record would be used against you in the sense that you may not be able to travel abroad, you may not be able to be bonded, you may not be able to have access to things that other people in society are able to do. Our system of law says you have to live as a citizen and not break the law. If you do break the law and you're convicted, you've got to do the time. You've got to pay the penalty. You've got to do the time. You have to make restitution for what it is you've done.

Well, in cases where people have actually gone out and done that and have decided, "You know what? I'm going to stay straight; I'm not going to do that kind of activity in the future," their record at times could be brought back to where—it's frustrating, and they say, "Well, jeez, I'm doing everything I can essentially not to live that life that I used to live before," when it came to those things that the person may have been charged with and convicted for, but they get frustrated because the information sometimes didn't come out of their record. That could be a real problem, especially when it comes to employment and when it comes to mobility of travel.

It's a good thing that the government brings this bill forward. Is it what everybody else wanted? Was it a bill where people can say, "Everything I ever asked for is in

this bill"? Absolutely not. But I think it is a step in the right direction and, for that much, it's a bill that is worth being able to support, in order to allow those people greater flexibility in being able to have their record—to make sure that if there's something that remains on the record and they've paid the time, it's in their past and it's no longer applicable, to be able to remove it.

That being said, if a person has been charged with a serious offence, obviously that information is going to stay on the record. There are times where we want the information to stay in the record: If the person was charged with a sexual crime of some type, especially against children, or there is some serious offence that the person has done. This bill is not about—and I hope not—removing those types of pieces of information from the record. That's not what this bill does. A person who has done a serious offence would still have that information show up on their record. Obviously, it would have to be something for which they have been convicted. But there are a lot of cases where a bunch of teenagers are hanging out, they go out, they do something stupid one night; they decide they are going to go out and buy a bag of pot or do whatever it is, and they're pulled over by police. I would hope that people don't do that, but now it's going to be legal under Mr. Trudeau's tenure as Prime Minister—which I find is kind of interesting, because if we were talking about decriminalization, I'd probably be supportive of that. I don't know about legalization, but that's a whole other debate. It's for the federal House; we'll let them deal with it.

But my point is that sometimes we do some silly things when we're younger people, and it's not meant to be that we are going to be into a life of crime. It's just one of those things that happens in your youth. When I was growing up, in high school and in grade seven and grade eight in Timmins—I never did it, but there were a lot of people who stole cars. That was the thing that some people did back then. My brother and I, I remember, used to run away from buddies of ours because we knew that if we ever got caught, my dad would lock the door and throw away the key; we would never get back into the house. So we stayed away from any of that type of activity. But there are people, unfortunately, who went along for the ride. And if you got caught, you got charged. Something like that could be affecting your record for a very long time. Was it a smart thing to do? Absolutely not, for the 15-, 16- or 17-year-old who got into that activity. But is it something that they should pay for the rest of their life, especially if there was no harm done?

I think what this bill tries to do is to look at those types of cases and to say that this is something where there isn't a cost to society, the person is not in a position to give any kind of idea that the society is at risk, because the person has a clean record. It's to allow that type of situation to be dealt with so that people can go on with their lives and become valuable contributors to our community.

With that, Speaker, I just wanted to put on the record that I think this is a step in the right direction. Obviously,

there's a balance in all this stuff, in making sure that we don't end up where people who shouldn't have their records cleared are cleared, and I think the bill tries to deal with that in a fairly adequate way.

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

Mr. Balkissoon has moved third reading of Bill 113. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I wish to inform the House that I have received a request from the chief government whip to defer this vote until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes, pursuant to standing order 28(h).

Third reading vote deferred.

**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 November 26, 2015, on the motion for third 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): Further debate? The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

1520

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, thank you, Speaker. I thought that I might have a little more time, but in the absence of time, perhaps the presence of water would help. If I could have a couple of glasses, that would be wonderful.

I do have a little bit of time on the clock today. We may not use it all because—oh, but then again, maybe we will.

Bill 112: One of these times when the intentions of the government were certainly noble, but then—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Stop now.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Minister of Transportation says, "Stop now," because even he has come to believe that that's not possible. It's in his words; he said, "Stop now." Perhaps he knows something that I don't know; that the intentions of the government were, in fact, perhaps not so noble. But I do appreciate the help from the minister. It's nice that he wants to pitch in and help from time to time.

But no, I honestly say that—gosh, do you remember, Speaker, years ago when Marketplace did the exposé on

door-to-door retailers of energy contracts? I'm sure you do, and I'm sure everybody in this House does as well. I remember my good friend Shane Pospisil, former assistant deputy minister in the Ministry of Energy and also, following that, the CEO of the Ontario Energy Association, helped spearhead some changes to the legislation that made the industry more responsible for their actions. They tried hard to weed out the rogue agents and stuff like that. They made changes that would make it better for consumers here in the province of Ontario.

Then, a couple of years ago, the government here brought in some other legislation that made further changes with respect to how consumers would be treated: verification of contracts etc. But in this bill, I think they've gone a little too far. We made that clear in committee.

I'll say to my friends in the third party here—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Friends?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I do consider them friends, in the broadest sense of the word.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Are you broadening the ownership?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I'm broadening the ownership of friendship—broadening the definition of friendship.

I say "my friends in the NDP"—the reason I say that is that the NDP have a belief—and more power to them. At least they stand by their belief on this and they don't play around. They believe that there should be no such thing as an energy contract business out there; they should all be banned, full stop, not for sale; no energy contracts. You buy your energy through the channels that are set up such as LDC or Hydro One, the big LDC. That's what they believe, and that's great.

We don't happen to share that philosophy. The Liberals aren't sure what philosophy they share, so they keep coming up with legislation that tries to make them appear to be the great protectorate of the consumer, but deep down, they just have an identity crisis. They're just not sure who they are or what side of the fence they want to fall on.

So they brought in Bill 112 and it made some changes that I thought were too far. Here we are in third reading, after the amendment stage. We did propose some amendments to the bill. One of those amendments was accepted because it made sense. Two of our other main amendments were not accepted, and I do believe that they would make sense as well. So, as I say, if you're trying to say, "This sector of our economy no longer exists and we're banning it completely," then so be it. Bring forth the legislation. I'm sure the folks, my friends in the NDP, would support it.

But they haven't done that because they're not really clear, as I say, where they stand on this. In fact, I think my friend from Mississippi Mills would probably say they're not sure where they stand on a lot of things.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thought you were our friend.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I'm talking about the Liberals on that. Don't get so sensitive. Go back to your

iPad. But if you're going to pay attention, you've got to pay complete attention.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, it's not an iPad; it's a Windows 8 machine. I have better class than that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Okay, Windows 8. What would I know about technology? I'm the old-fashioned guy.

Anyway, the Liberals aren't really sure what they're doing about anything. They wanted to make a statement, and they've made a statement. But here's where I think they've gone too far. We brought in an amendment. In this bill, anybody who is in the business of selling electricity contracts cannot be remunerated in any way that is commission-oriented. So they're saying, "You can't earn a commission for selling this particular product."

Well, would it not be appropriate, then, that the government come out and say that commissions are no longer legal in the province of Ontario? Of course they're not going to do that, because there would be a hue and cry that you could hear from Moosonee to Point Pelee and all points in between, because it would be ludicrous for them to do that. But they're taking one sector and saying, "You can't pay your employees on the basis of a commission."

One thing about commissions that has always existed is that it is an incentive to work hard. Obviously, we have to establish rules so that people are working ethically and treating the customer in an honest way, but working on commission—my wife works on commission. My wife sells real estate. Should the practice of her earning a commission for selling a piece of property be banned? I think not. Yet the government has decided that in this particular sector, commissions will be banned.

We're very disappointed in that decision, because it's not justified for any reason other than that they want to make a strong political statement without making the full statement: "We're not going to allow the sale of energy contracts anymore." So they're continuing with the practice, but they're hamstringing the industry to the extent that it may result in the end of it anyway. They haven't got the cojones, as they say, to come out and say you can't do it anymore.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I think I have to caution the member on his choice of wording. Obviously, it has created an outburst on the other side of the House. I would ask him to be very careful of the wording he is using in this House, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker.

They lack the intestinal fortitude to actually stand behind their conviction. They would rather protest on a word than bring out a piece of legislation that actually says what they really want to do. So they bring in Bill 112, which bans the practice of remuneration by commission. I'm very disappointed in that, because again there is no justifiable reason for doing so; none whatsoever.

The other amendment we have proposed—I can't for the life of me understand why the government would be

against that amendment, but let me back up just a little bit. There is now a verification process in the legislation, which the government brought, that you would have to have a waiting period of 20 days in order to actually proceed with a transaction. Think about this: Even if it's at the customer's initiation, the original government legislation said you have to wait 20 days.

Speaker, if you're buying a product, in this day and age—you're buying a new car, and you go over to the Ford, GM, Chrysler, Toyota, Honda, whatever dealership and you make a deal on a car. And then the Liberal government watchdogs come swooping in onto the dealership and say, "Congratulations, Mr. Speaker. You've bought yourself a car. Oh, but by the way, you can't have that car for 20 days. You're going to have to confirm that you actually want it."

1530

Can you imagine what would happen to those Liberal government watchdogs that came swooping down on the car dealership? They would be found—or maybe not found. Maybe, like Jimmy Hoffa, they wouldn't be found. People would say, "That's not the way we're going to do business here in the province of Ontario. If I want to buy something, I should have the right to do so."

So the government agreed to our amendment that would reduce that period from 20 days to 10 days—at least some kind of accommodation that if I want a product, I want it as soon as possible. People shop online all the time now and when they get that product they want it and they want it quick. I haven't done much online shopping, but I must say, any time—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Cyber Monday.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What's that, Jimmy?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Cyber Monday starts today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Cyber Monday starts today. That's right.

Anything that I have bought online, I have been absolutely amazed at the speed at which it has arrived.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Twenty days?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, no. God, sometimes the next day, a couple of days, and that is up in Barry's Bay. It's not the easiest place to get to.

But when I make that deal, I want to buy that. I want to buy that and I want to get it as soon as I can.

Here is—

Hon. David Zimmer: Especially the LCBO.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You can't buy online there, I say to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, because they'd have to verify that you actually can legally buy that product.

Mr. Norm Miller: You can buy wine.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Can you?

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: We brought an amendment that would allow you to verify that contract online. So you want to buy something now from one of these energy retailers; you agreed to it. There is this waiting period, which they reduced to 10 days, and our position was that you should be able to do that verification online. You

should be able to go online and say, “I, John Yakabuski, agree to a contract with dah-dah-dah-dah for product X beginning at such and such a time.” But the Liberals say no; no online verification. And I say this to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville—he’s playing on some kind of a technological gizmo there right now. He loves that stuff.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. The member is welcome to comment on the bill but not to make an allegation against other members pursuant to standing order 23(h).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would never condemn a member for using an electronic gizmo while in the chamber; however, I would ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to resume his speech. He has the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much. I’m not sure what word he objected to, so we’ll withdraw the word “playing.” He’s doing something on some kind of electronic gizmo over there and—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, sorry. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville on a point of order, I gather.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the same point of order: The member may not either impute motive or make an allegation against another member, and the choice of the member’s word did both. I refer the Speaker to standing orders 23(h), (j) and (k). It is the second time I’ve raised this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don’t believe the member has a valid point of order.

I return to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. He can point-of-order himself into oblivion. Perhaps, when he joins the Legislature on his future planet, they won’t have points of order.

Anyway, Speaker, here is the technological guru here—the member for Mississauga–Streetsville—who always likes to talk about how in tune he is with technology and how he’s into the latest thing, this or that—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’ve already ruled that the member doesn’t have a valid point of order, but I would ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to make sure that his language is temperate and appropriate for the Legislature and not unduly—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Bombastic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott):—bombastic. Sure, that’s a good word.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member’s point of order—Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. I refer the Speaker to standing order 23(b)(i). The member must

actually address the subject of the bill. The last time I checked, I was not the subject of that bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That is a valid point of order, in my opinion. I would ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to address the bill with his comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. The member is the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Energy that brought forward this legislation, and in the committee he was the one who led all the decisions with respect to the amendments that we either approved or did not approve. He was the government lead in the committee. So is he part of the discussion? Absolutely. In the absence of the Minister of Energy in the committee—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: In the committee—thank you, member for St. Catharines. He has awakened, as well.

In the absence of the Minister of Energy in the committee, he was his spokesperson, and he was the one who made the decisions as to whether these amendments would live or die.

This is part of the public record. The man prides himself on being up to date on technology all the time, yet when he had the opportunity to allow technology to take its course and allow online verification of a contract in this day and age, 2015, he chose to go the way of the Luddites and say, “No”—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You mean Jim Bradley?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes—“you’re going to have to use the telephone.” In Liberal Ontario, online verification will be unacceptable. You’ll have to get on the phone. I want to look at this, what happens with regulation. Maybe he’ll actually come out with something that has to be a rotary dial. You’re going to have to do your verification, Speaker, with a telephone.

So instead of getting on the computer or on one of those gizmos that apparently you can use in the Legislature here today—it’s amazing, because the member for Mississauga–Streetsville or any other member in this House can be using one of these gizmos in the House. He could be verifying an energy contract right now on his gizmo, but he couldn’t be verifying an energy contract by telephone because you can’t use a telephone in the Legislature.

It’s just in keeping with the advancements in technology that they would allow today’s technology to be part of the equation. They had a great opportunity, still, to show all the protection they want to show for the consumer. But let’s do it in a way that actually says that we’ve come out of the Dark Ages here in the Ontario Legislature and we recognize that so many things are done online today. What would be the problem? I’ve got a feeling that there is going to be a bill coming forth and it is going to say, “To all members of the assembly: email is now illegal. Get out your pen and paper and start writing”—

Applause.

1540

Mr. John Yakabuski: —to which Jim Bradley would say, “Hallelujah.” Well, I say to the member for St. Cath-

arines, unfortunately—not unfortunately; maybe unfortunately for him—the reality is we are not going backwards. Technology only ever moves in one direction. It gets faster and faster and more advanced all the time.

Yes, there can be some glitches. We understand that. Look at that computer program that they brought in at the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Glitches? That was about a \$400-million glitch, so it can happen. But that was not the reason why the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy, the member for Mississauga—Streetsville, stood in committee and blocked this amendment. It wasn't because he was concerned that there were going to be glitches. It was just that the Liberals can't let it happen that another party in this Legislature would actually come up with a good idea.

We came up with an amendment to the legislation that said, "Okay, we get it. You are going to have to have 10 days to verify a contract. You'll have to wait 10 days to get that technology or that service that you want." Ten days. Okay, I get it. But can you not, from the comfort of your home or wherever you have access to your electronic devices, go online and verify in a secure fashion your transaction?

Now, I would in no way—because I don't want another point of order, Speaker—imply that I know anything about the member's life, but I suspect that he may have been part of an online transaction at some point in his lifetime, and he has probably talked to many, many people about how convenient that was, for him to be able to do that online, rather than have to do it the old-fashioned way.

You had a great opportunity, I say to the member. If he spent less time thinking about what his next point of order was going to be and more time thinking about how he could actually help the consumer—this is not something that would have any negative effect on the consumer whatsoever. It is something that the consumer is wanting, and demanding, in fact: the ability to make their transactions as convenient as possible.

It's done securely, whether you're using the things like PayPal or—what are some of the other ones?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thought you weren't into technology.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I listen to my kids from time to time. They usually send me a note electronically wanting money.

Mr. Bill Walker: You can go back to the "White-Berry" then, though.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

If this—I kind of lost my train of thought there. But this is what consumers want. They want to be able to do that. They have these gizmos, they have these pieces of electronic equipment, and they want to make the most use of them. Yet they're being told, "Get on the telephone and wade through 'You have reached,' and 'If you want to speak to so-and-so, press 2. If you would like the company directory, please press the star'—oh no, sorry; press the number sign.

So they've got to go through this rigmarole, and then, if you have any doubts about where you're going, it goes,

"You have pressed an incorrect key. Please call again later. B-e-e-e-p."

But that's what it's like in Liberal Ontario, wherein the consumer would like to say, "My team is losing the football game," the hockey game, whatever. "You know what? It's 10 days." They pour themselves a cup of tea—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, a beer.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Okay, whatever—go to their room or whatever they like to use for solitude and privacy and when they don't want any distractions, and get on the computer and verify the contract for that service that they so badly want. They wish they could have had it nine days ago, but the member for Mississauga—Streetsville said no. So now, "I'm still going to get that product, but, oh, it's 9 o'clock at night. There's not going to be anybody there. Oh, I've got to wait until tomorrow. Why can't I just do it online?"

So I ask myself, and I ask the member—I made all these arguments at committee. You know what the Liberals said? "Oh, no, no, no. We want to do it backwards. You've got to get on the telephone—full stop." We know the world doesn't stop for anything; it's not a static entity. It just keeps moving and keeps on spinning. That's what you get from the Liberals, because that's what you're going to get about this bill: more and more spin, just like you get every day here in question period—spin, spin, spin. They should turn it into a renewable energy source because it would never run out. Liberal spin is inexhaustible.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: And now for something completely different. Maybe not as entertaining, though, I must admit.

I am pleased, though, actually to stand up today on behalf of the constituents of Kitchener—Waterloo and join the debate on Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. I will, at the onset, say I'm going to be borrowing heavily from my colleague from London West, Ms. Sattler. I did secure copyright permission, though, I just want to tell you—something we're still waiting for from the PC caucus, where you keep asking all of our questions. You should at least pay us for those questions.

This long title—and I'm going to be using the long title for the official title of the bill. I'm referring to the bill deliberately by that official title because I think it captures much more accurately what the bill is all about. It really reflects the intention of the 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 true intention of this legislation when they refer to it as "strengthening consumer protection," because it doesn't, and "electricity system oversight act," which it does, to the detriment of the people of this province.

Now, we are used to dealing with these titles of these bills which say one thing but actually do another. Just a

few examples: Bill 106, for instance, Protecting Condominium Owners Act, which doesn't even deal with the issue of Tarion. Do you remember Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, which actually set up a barrier, essentially, for the children's advocate in the province of Ontario to not have it come under Auditor General oversight? There is, once again, this walking contradiction around legislation that comes from the Liberal Party; and it's discouraging, quite honestly, because they have such potential to actually make substantive changes which could impact the people of this province positively.

As I mentioned, the official title clarifies that Bill 112 is actually two 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 is a significant shift. 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 they will be exempted from participating in decisions like this under this proposed legislation.

1550

I'd just like to point out, to be consistent, that this is exactly the opposite of the sales job that we got during the last election. This government was going to be more open and transparent. This government was going to involve more consultation. This government was going to operate from this activist centre. Who knew that at that activist centre there was this Walmart sale, the fire sale of Hydro One? I mean, it's just incredible.

People across the province—80% of the people in this province—have shared their concerns with this sale. For us, it's a complete feeling of helplessness in the face of all evidence, including the most recent Financial Accountability Officer's report. He points out very clearly that there will be a reduction in general revenues; there will not be a reduction to the debt. In fact, this will have long-term financial consequences which will negatively impact this province. This Premier promised to put evidence above partisanship, to put research and evidence into making decisions and embed it through policy creation. It's totally a 180 on the sell-off of Hydro One.

We believe strongly that the sell-off of Hydro One deserves the scrutiny that every Ontarian should bring to this place. We have encouraged people from across this province to contact their MPPs—their Liberal MPPs—to share their concerns, because those concerns are real. That is why we as New Democrats have brought all of

our opposition day motions to the floor of this Legislature, because the people of this province have asked us to do so so that there can be an open debate. At every turn, though, this government has shut the door on the democratic rights of the people of this province to actually have a say in what happens with Hydro One.

We have heard repeatedly during question period the government reassuring Ontarians not to worry: "You will have the protection." This is what they say. This is a direct quote: "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." This is the big promise.

One wonders, surely, though, that 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. It's really quite something.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No. We've got transmission lines that go nowhere in the province of Ontario.

This embeds, once again, the politics into the electricity system.

It was really interesting. I don't know if you caught any of Mr. Dalton McGuinty's interview last week. It's very creative writing, I must tell you, the revisionism on where cabinet was around the decision to move gas plants and how he didn't really know what was actually going on because he had put people in charge, even though some of those people had direct connections and pecuniary interests, financial investment into those decisions that they would financially benefit from.

He said, "You know what? I trusted those people and those people let us down." Well, really, the responsibility of leadership is just that, Mr. Speaker. It goes right to the top. I think, in the context of the electricity file in this province, it bears repeating that the Financial Accountability Officer—which we negotiated to come to this place because if there was ever a government in the history of the province who needed that sober second thought, if you will, or that "Just in case, you might want to think about this," it would be this government.

The Financial Accountability Officer, thank goodness, of his own volition, of his own incentive, came forward and presented the report on the Hydro One sale. And it was really interesting because, for obvious reasons, we put more weight with that report than we do with the fall economic statement we received last Thursday.

The Financial Accountability Officer very clearly outlined that the sale of Hydro One, in very short order, is going to negatively impact the revenue that comes into

this province. Then, one of the first sentences in the fall economic statement is the government saying, “Well, if revenue falls, we’re going to have to use some other tools to address the shortfall.” You have the government that say, “We have to sell Hydro One to fund infrastructure” even though no other province does this, and even though it’s a complete and utter false choice that if you were to actually stop the sale of Hydro One, all infrastructure investment would end. It’s completely a false choice in that regard. The FAO points out that revenue will drop; he has done the economic modelling to show that. The fall economic statement says, “If the revenues do drop, we’re going to have to do this.”

Very creatively, I guess, this government is doing what Mr. Snobelen did way back, in education. Remember? “Let’s create a crisis in education and then we can bring in some very big changes.” This government is doubling down on the crisis that it has already created through clearly not having the appropriate financial controls on spending and the oversight from a fiscal responsibility perspective, especially with the privatization of public services. We have Auditor General report after Auditor General report which point, quite honestly, to this government’s incompetence in following through on the operationalizing of ideas—like road maintenance, for instance, or the Ontera deal, just as an example.

In what world would a government hire consultants to the tune of \$6.5 million to come out with a price for Ontera of \$6.1 million, when that asset was valued at \$61 million? That’s the kind of Liberal math that the people of this province are going to continually have to pay for, and it definitely falls on the government’s deaf ears for some reason.

Quite honestly, the fall economic statement that came out last week really is a road map for the continued privatization of this province. We don’t have to go down that road if this government did what they were supposed to do, if the President of the Treasury Board would actually address the lack of financial controls and oversight around the contracting out, and if the finance minister would start investing in job creation strategies that actually work, instead of giving hundreds of millions of dollars to corporations and going to a press conference and cutting a ribbon. That’s not how you build Ontario up. In fact, I might respectfully say that in many respects, that’s how you actually pull a good, strong province down and hurt the most vulnerable people in this province.

What we saw last week in the fall economic statement was really another billion-dollar shuffle. Trying to follow the money in this place is becoming more and more difficult. There are some shells that are constantly moving, I would have to say.

Ms. Cindy Forster: They’re being juggled.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They’re constantly moving. That’s why, just on the energy file, I did ask this morning—in the last fiscal year this government forced Ontario’s electricity consumers to pay \$956 million in debt retirement charges on their electricity bills—\$956

million. That was in the last fiscal year. These charges were supposed to pay down the residual stranded debt left over from the old Ontario Hydro. But instead, last week we found out, when the fall economic statement was released, that only \$400 million went to the residual stranded debt. So what did the government do with the other \$556 million? That’s a big question.

Ms. Cindy Forster: You asked him that this morning.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I did, and I did not get an answer. I know they don’t call it “answer period.” I know that’s why they don’t call it answer period, and we live it every single day here.

Just to get back to how this bill is actually going to play itself out, Bill 112, the bill that we’re currently debating, allows the government to bypass the public interest needs test. That’s what we’re saying about Bill 112. 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 construction, expansion or reinforcement is needed when forming its opinion.”

1600

Electricity and energy advocates from across the province have raised red flags, red Liberal flags; there are a lot of Liberal red flags going up across the province. 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. This bill weakens 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. They’re formalizing the terrible experience we’ve just gone through with Hydro One. They’re really just formalizing it.

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. This government’s record, even on transmission lines, my colleague has already identified. We already have transmission lines that go nowhere—full stop. It really is not clear us to on this side of the House why the government needs the power to bypass this important needs test process, especially when we’ve already gone through moving around gas plants like chess pieces in the province of Ontario and this latest Hydro One deal.

We’ve heard, though, that the Minister of Energy claimed that the changes are necessary to give the government the authority to initiate transmission projects, as if they didn’t already have this authority and this power. And it’s important to keep in mind that the government has the power it needs to initiate and champion priority transmission projects right now. You don’t need this piece of legislation. There is no reason whatsoever for the government to seek additional authority to push through transmission projects without the review from the Ontario Energy Board and without determining whether the public interest is served. I’m going to get to

consumer protection, but this is not a piece of legislation that we can support, because it is clearly not in the interests of the people of this province.

For obvious reasons, the government would like to keep the focus on the first part, the part where they talk about consumer protection. They know that there is huge need for consumer protection from aggressive door-to-door salespeople who employ, quite honestly—and we have evidence to prove this—unethical, shady and sometimes ruthless practices in their interactions with people as they try to sell electricity contracts. It can't be a fun job, but these people can be very aggressive. I think all of us would have seniors in our communities who have fallen prey to these salespeople.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Not only seniors.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not only seniors; that's very true.

These electricity retailers too often prey on seniors and others. 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 them 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 in the first place.

This is a long-standing issue, Mr. Speaker. It has taken this long for this government to bring forward a piece of legislation which does not even address the core problem. Just to recap, this problem first emerged back 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 might pay higher rates.

Ms. Cindy Forster: That Ernie Eves.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know. That's the old party, though. Now we've got a kitteny-cottony sort of version of a new party.

These people went door to door to promise consumers that they might pay higher rates but they would have the stability of fixed rates. That was the promise back in 2002. By 2004, as electricity rates were skyrocketing due to privatization and deregulation, it was clear that something had to be done. Deregulation was abandoned at that time and the regulated price plan—do you remember the RPP, because you were here actually—was introduced to help cushion consumers from the impact of those hydro rate spikes. The RPP is reviewed twice a year by the OEB so that it better reflects the true cost of producing electricity.

I know I'm 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 to do business budgets. We just saw a report this summer about what a serious impediment the inability to budget for electricity costs is to business growth and development in this province. Actually, that was the Ontario Chamber of

Commerce. They came out publicly because they were hearing lots of stuff from this government—

Ms. Cindy Forster: It also makes it difficult for families to do laundry—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, laundry at midnight.

So there's 2002, 2004. Certainly, there is widespread anxiety and fear, and with real justification, that the privatization of Hydro One is only going to make this problem worse; that we're going to see even more ups and downs in the rates—skyrocketing, out-of-control hydro rates that are really going to disadvantage people who are on fixed incomes and are barely able to budget for food and rent, much less deal with rates that go all over the place from month to month

In particular, small businesses—our small and medium-sized manufacturers are hurting, and they are incredibly concerned about the instability of hydro rates. Because there are businesses that can't choose to just work at certain times of the day. They just can't. Again, they see the Hydro One sell-off for what it is: It's a quick cash grab so that this government can create the illusion of balancing a budget.

We've said—and now the Conservatives are saying it—it really is like burning the furniture to heat the house, but what we learned last week is that not only are they burning the furniture to heat the house, they're planning to put the whole house up for sale just so they can buy a little more time in that house. That's essentially what will be happening with the declaration that, as revenue drops, this province is going to have to use other privatization tools. They are setting the course, Mr. Speaker. We are incredibly concerned, and the people of this province should be very concerned as well.

Just 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 the complaint calls to the OEB concern door-to-door sales, misleading information and unethical behaviour at the door—70% to 90%.

There was another report that came out in 2012—that hot summer that we had—and it was called The Power to Deliver. It had some recommendations that were significant around the Electricity Distributors Association, which also recommended a full phase-out of energy retailers. So there's long-standing feedback from energy stakeholders from across the province on what needs to happen in the electricity sector, as I mentioned, going all the way back to 2002.

Happily, though, I can say that we have done our part on this side of the House. There is a mechanism right now in place to ensure this phase-out of energy retailing, and that is the private member's bill that was introduced by our 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—Bill 112, which actually doesn't address the issue. The goal of that private member's bill is to phase out fixed-rate electricity

contracts for residential consumers, not simply to introduce some of the watered-down reforms that the government has brought forward.

Why? This is the constant theme. This is what I've learned in three years and two months of being in this House: When the Liberals get a chance to bring forward a piece of legislation, they only go a quarter of the way, and then they leave the heavy lifting for us. In a minority government, we actually could make that legislation stronger, we could make it better, and it could be more reflective of the real needs of the people of this province. In a majority setting, they don't want to play in the sandbox; they don't want to listen and they don't want this participatory democracy to actually be a participatory democracy.

The member from Kenora–Rainy River brought forward a really strong piece of legislation that really would end predatory electricity retailing in the province of Ontario, and it would phase out the fixed-rate electricity contracts for residential consumers. So it truly would be very effective. It's at the Standing Committee on General Government. We highly recommend that the government just call this bill. Let's get it done. Let's protect consumers 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. When I was reading this, I sort of got that Monty Python song in my head. I think this might be a movie soon; that's how strong the spin is from that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. It will be a commercial. The Auditor General won't get to look at it because they removed that oversight, as you remember, but it will be about consumers coming first even though the legislation does nothing about that.

1610

So here we are, on the last day of November 2015. Just to reflect, as I said, the majority of people have a serious concern about the Hydro One sell-off. The fall economic statement does little to instill confidence in this government's ability to actually navigate through the financial situation in this province. In fact, we have evidence to show that the government's plans hurt the economy. We feel strongly that the energy retailing system is a mess, and we highly recommend that the next bill you bring forward—just call it that, because that's the truth. That's the next accurate new title that should come from this government: "We feel strongly that the energy retailing system is a mess."

We won't be supporting this bill because it doesn't address the real issues of the people of this province.

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

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 22, 2015, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Delaney has moved third reading of Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I wish to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the chief government whip asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes, pursuant to standing order 28(h).

Third reading vote deferred.

ENERGY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 26, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill 135. It's quite interesting: The whole debate all afternoon has been on trust. It's also been us in the opposition trying to get the government to listen to some of our concerns about some of the issues that have been happening in this fall session. Certainly, one has to do with energy in this province and the government's policies—and non-policies, it would seem—on hydro especially.

I would like to read a letter that I wrote to the Premier on November 5 concerning the Hydro One sale. It says:

"Your decision to proceed with the fire sale of Hydro One will have devastating consequences for the province and my constituents. As of today, there is no turning back. You have allowed the sale of Hydro One shares on the Toronto Stock Exchange, resulting in the loss of majority ownership of one of our largest public utilities. Many of my constituents have written to me to express their concern, even outrage, over your actions.

"They are right to be concerned, because this is a bad deal. Many people have told you so, including your Financial Accountability Officer; around 80% of the public, according to recent polls; 165 municipalities including the city of Stratford, the municipality of North Perth, the municipality of West Perth and the township of Wellington North, which I represent.

"Hydro One brings in \$700 million a year to the people of Ontario. Your sell-off, however, could net as little as \$1.4 billion for infrastructure funding. In fact, the Financial Accountability Officer has reported that in the coming years, your 'budget balance would be worse than

it would have been without the sale.' This is a devastating indictment of your policy.

"My constituents and I are especially concerned about the effect on hydro rates. With the loss of majority ownership of Hydro One, we will be forced to accept any changes made by the new owners—including higher rates—without the benefit of public oversight.

"Individuals, families and businesses have already paid a steep price for your government's expensive energy experiments. We know that rates in Ontario are now among the very highest in North America and, because of your policies, are set to go even higher. We need your absolute assurance that your misguided plan to sell off Hydro One will not mean even more rate increases. We simply cannot afford it."

Speaker, this bill that I'm speaking to this afternoon, Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning, certainly speaks to what I opened my debate on accountability and transparency with.

The new section 25.29 removes the IESO's responsibility to assess the current energy system's reliability, purpose, effectiveness and general use. Instead, it replaces a self-conducted assessment with long-term energy planning done by the Minister of Energy. The minister, with approval from cabinet, will issue a long-term energy plan once every prescribed period. Certainly, we don't know what a prescribed period is at this time.

The LTEP can address issues including cost-effectiveness of the energy sector, reliability and the impacts the energy sector has on climate change, prioritizing conservation and management of energy demand efforts, the use of cleaner energy sources and new technologies, emissions from the energy sector, consultation with aboriginal peoples and other communities, and any other matter the minister wishes. Essentially, the LTEP will be issued in line with the government of the day's political priorities, overriding the IESO in every way.

The new LTEP provisions force the minister to consult with consumers, generators, transmitters and aboriginal peoples. The minister must consider these consultations when developing the LTEP but does not have to publish the results of the consultation. There's no regulation surrounding how these consultations must be consulted. Again, this relates to honesty and transparency, certainly something the government has issues with.

It also says the minister must publish the final LTEP, which is the long-term energy plan, on a government website and publish any other information, such as key data and cost projections, used in the development of the plan, but only if the minister determines it should be made publicly available.

Speaker, it seems to me that with this type of legislation, it is an opportunistic way for the government to hide any criticism of what they are doing. As it says here, the minister does not have to publish the results of these consultations, and the minister will determine if it's made public. This is something that we, on this side of House,

have had issues with, certainly in this fall sitting and certainly when it was first announced that Hydro One would be for sale.

1620

The IESO may submit amendments to the plan to the minister. It is up to the minister, and not the IESO, to approve any amendments to the plan, no matter how logical or needed. Speaker, I think the IESO would have a lot more knowledge of the energy sector than the minister has, simply because they work in it all the time. If they have any suggestions that they think the minister should contemplate, it's up to the minister, as I said, to approve those amendments and, certainly, what he deems to be necessary in his long-term energy plan.

The minister must also approve the implementation plan, and can change any portion of the plan. There is no way for the IESO to raise objection to the changes or veto the minister in any way. Essentially, the IESO must do what the minister wants.

Speaker, I would suggest that there's really not much sense in having an IESO, because they are powerless. If the minister deems to make any changes to the long-term energy plan, he does it at his own discretion, and I would suggest that this is where politics can get involved. Certainly, we've seen what happens around election time, where this government has promised things in order to try to win the election, and then, after the election, they have backed off on their promises.

We certainly saw this in rural Ontario near my riding, in the riding of Huron-Bruce and, certainly, the riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, where a number of hospitals were promised money for renovations in the 2011 election—I believe there were six of them—and when the election was all over with, this government forgot about five of them; I think those were the numbers. So, to make promises to win elections and not carry on with them, even if they don't get their way and don't win the election as they hoped to, although they did win a minority government at that time—certainly people in my riding think this is rather sinister and shouldn't happen. But this bill will give the minister power to do things under this type of legislation.

Also, under this section, the minister can force the IESO to procure contracts, which now can include transmission and energy storage. This, again, makes the IESO a puppet to the political goals of the government. The IESO must consult with aborigines or other groups, as the minister sees fit, when producing these projects.

Speaker, I think we have seen, for the most part, what the Green Energy Act has done to rural Ontario. We have seen where it has changed the landscape. It certainly changed different things in the ridings. It put ridings against each other and put municipalities against each other, and this bill will certainly encourage that kind of behaviour.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Isn't it further debate?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We're doing second reading—two-minute questions and comments.

I'm pleased to recognize the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. I thought I was getting up to do 10 minutes, but now I'm getting up to do two.

Speaker, I have listened very carefully to what the member for Perth–Wellington had to say. He talked, really, about trust. I think that's what this bill is all about. We're asked to look at this bill and put all of our blind faith in what the minister says: "Trust me. I'm from the government, and I'm here to help." He's stripping away all the power from the Ontario Energy Board and the IESO and saying, "We don't need you anymore to do long-range planning on energy, because I'm going to do it. It makes more sense for me to do it, because I'm the energy minister."

You all know how well that has been working out.

We all know that nobody in Ontario voted for anybody who came to the door and said, "Vote for me, and I'll sell Hydro One." That didn't happen. Now, all of a sudden, it's up for sale. It's up for sale, and the people who own it—the taxpayers of Ontario—were never consulted, never had a say, were never asked to vote in a referendum on whether they wanted to sell it. Instead, the minister says, "Trust me; I know what's best. After all, I'm the energy minister."

Well, guess what? There are a lot of people—they come from about 185 municipalities; 80% of the population—who don't trust the government and don't trust the minister when they say, "Trust me," because they voted against the sale of Hydro One at the municipal level. They voted. The municipal governments have voted. The Liberals' own polling number: 80% are opposed. So we can't trust the energy minister to do what he says is best for Ontario. There's no trust out there for him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I do trust this guy.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I trust you too. You're a good man, and you represent your people well. I think that I'll sit down with you any time, because I know we'd have a shared sense of purpose.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting topic. Energy has had a very long and far less than distinguished history in this province for several decades. It's difficult to actually contemplate the state of the energy system in 2003 when the government switched. The honourable member opposite may be interested to know that there was something in excess of \$13 billion in necessary repairs. Of course, we could talk about the stranded debt, too, but I wouldn't want to do that today, because that might get us off the bill itself.

As for trust, I trust the Minister of Energy. I think he's doing a really good job of unscrambling some of the difficulties he has had to deal with. To make things clearer for people, I think there is some distrust out there; I would acknowledge that. But you don't eliminate distrust by sticking with the status quo; you try to fix it.

The best political advice I ever got was from the late, great Sterling Hunt, a beef and dairy farmer up in Lynden, who said to me, when I was running for mayor, "Ted, if you want to get elected, it's simple. Just tell the people what's broke and how you're going to fix it." When I'm stuck, I always go back to that. I think this is what this bill was attempting to do. It will undoubtedly bring more accountability when the minister has more skin in the game than he has previously had.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to stand and add a few moments of discussion to my colleague from Perth–Wellington, who always does a great job and is always out there representing his people to the best of his ability.

One of the comments he brought up, and that many of us have in this House, was about the fire sale of Hydro One. It has come to light again through the Financial Accountability Officer, through many organizations and from many, many individuals in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound who have come up to me and asked, "Why are they going for the short-term gain? Why are they going to sell this just to make their budget miraculously balance by 2018, but the long-term pain we're going to suffer, as the people of Ontario; we're taking a \$700-million-per year revenue source out of our control? It doesn't make sense." I had numerous people of all political stripes come up and ask me the exact same question over the weekend at every event I was at. This government, when they inherited government, had the lowest rates of energy on the continent, and now we have the highest.

The Deputy Premier, in the last week or so, I think, probably said the real truth on W5: "We are out of money," meaning the Liberal government has run us into a hole and we're out of money. There are concerns with accountability that have been brought up: power taken from the IESO and given to the minister for the long-term energy plan. How has that worked? We have the worst energy policy in the province, probably in the country and perhaps in the world.

1630

My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh brought up trust and blind faith: "Just trust us." Yet they stripped accountability from the Auditor General, from the Ombudsman and a number of other people who are officers of this House. Just now, the Minister of Municipal Affairs suggested it was an interesting topic. I may agree with that, but to the people of Ontario, it's not an interesting topic; it's a critical, essential need and a service that they rely on. They heat their homes with it. Seniors have to do that. Business: It's one of the biggest factors for them. Schools and hospitals have had to have their budgets go up because of these exorbitant, high costs.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak briefly to the government bill, Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act.

I'm hearing speakers from the Liberals get up and talk about how there's going to be more skin in the game for the minister, and there's going to be more accountability and transparency. Well, in fact, that isn't going to be the case with this bill. The bill actually requires the Ontario Energy Board to implement directives as issued by the minister and approved by cabinet with respect to the construction, the expansion and the reinforcement of transmission systems as opposed to being independent, transparent and accountable. It's really an erosion of the Ontario Energy Board and not an improvement.

There's been a lot of stakeholder reaction to this bill. Energy consultant and lawyer George Vegh wrote a thorough review of these governance changes in Bill 135. He says, "It could lead one to wonder whether there are any checks and balances left in the system at all" by the time this Bill 135 passes third reading.

I hear from my constituents; every day they're sending me letters. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo today talked about the \$566 million that is missing in action from the debt retirement charge. I have emails from small business, from medium-sized businesses in my community, saying, "What's up with this debt retirement charge?" His factory's hydro bill has doubled in the last couple of years. He doesn't know if he can continue to operate on the day shift. He may have to move to a night shift to actually pay his hydro bills. At the same time, these debt retirement charges, which should be going to pay down the debt, to get rid of this debt, are going somewhere into an abyss.

I don't think we're going to see any improvements with this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Perth-Wellington. You have two minutes.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the members from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and Welland for their comments.

I, too, go by some advice that I heard from my mother-in-law. She just turned 93 years old on November 11. She still has her faculties about her and she's doing really well. One of the things she told me when I first got involved in politics was this if you keep this shut—your mouth—you'll hear more. That's something that this government seems to have an issue with: listening.

As I said before, 165 municipalities, including municipalities in my riding, and 80% of the public, according to recent polls, do not like this fire sale of Hydro One. This bill that we're speaking to this afternoon is going to give the minister more power to make decisions on his own and not have to accept the advice of agencies within the ministry that he has worked with in the past.

We've already seen what happens with this. Again, I mention the Green Energy Act that's affected rural Ontario in so many devastating ways but is also starting to affect urban Ontario because high hydro rates are coming this way in bigger leaps and bounds because of the Green Energy Act, which is certainly one of the

things that has gotten hydro rates to keep going up and up and up. It doesn't all have to do with rebuilding lines throughout Ontario.

This is so heavily subsidized that we're never going to get out of these subsidies. For about 20 years, we're going to be paying these subsidies. This is billions of dollars that the public—and now it's getting into urban Ontario. These rates are coming; they're going to keep on going.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. Once again, it's an honour to stand here in our provincial Parliament and speak on behalf of the good people in Windsor-Tecumseh. I guess that a lot of what I will have to say in the next 10 minutes or so will revolve around one theme, and that is trust.

That's right, Speaker. The government, through Bill 135, is asking the people of Ontario to take them at their word and trust that this bill is a good thing. The thing of it is, when it comes to trusting someone, we tend to look at the shared history we have with that person or with that party or with that government, as in this case. Bill 135 purports to establish a long-term energy planning process that is transparent, efficient and able to respond to changing policy and system needs. The minister sells his bill by saying that sound, prudent, long-term energy planning is essential to a clean, reliable, affordable energy future.

You'll forgive me, Speaker, but when I hear those words, I tend to believe they were written by the same ghostwriter who hands the speaking notes to the Liberals on the fire sale of Hydro One. You'll recall it's become their mantra: "We had no choice. We need to find the money to spend on infrastructure. We have no other option."

Now, I have no problem with the need for a long-term energy plan. I'd like to think that's what the Independent Electricity System Operator—the IESO—had been providing, in co-operation with the Ontario Energy Board—the OEB. This bill asks us to trust the Liberals when they strip power away from the OEB and the IESO and put it all in the lap of the energy minister and his cabinet colleagues.

That, my friends, is a huge leap of faith that we're being asked to go along with here. Think about it: We have two independent agencies and this bill wants us to go along with trusting the minister when he says that the OEB and IESO will become dependent on his decisions and follow his orders and follow his directions. Of course, he says, "This is all in the best interests of Ontario taxpayers." This is the same minister who was selling hydro, despite the express wishes of nearly 200 of Ontario's municipal governments. Even the Liberals' own polling numbers show 80% or more of the people in Ontario are opposed to selling their shares of Hydro One to private, profit-taking bankers and pension plans.

Hydro was created with the intention of remaining in public hands forever. They held a referendum and

another one a few years later, and hydro's customers voted by huge majorities not to sell their publicly held shares to private interests. Fast forward to today, and a fast-talking former banker says, "Ah, so what? This is what I think we should do." This is a man who has never been elected and he answers to no one.

This bill greases the skids to take away any oversight from the independent agencies: the Ontario Energy Board and the Independent Electricity System Operator. Instead, as we move forward, the power of oversight will rest with the Minister of Energy. No need for public hearings; no need to justify major changes to the electrical distribution system; no need for environmental assessments. If the minister says this is the way it is, the OEB and the IESO have no option. They have to do what the minister says. That's the issue of trust, Speaker, that I touched upon earlier.

You know as well as anyone in this provincial Parliament what the independent Financial Accountability Officer said about the Liberal plan to sell our hydro system. He said that selling hydro will put us further into debt. The Liberals like to say they have no option, no other choice but to sell Hydro One so they can build infrastructure. That's a hunk of baloney, of course—

Hon. David Zimmer: No, we want to build roads in Windsor.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We all know it's a hunk of baloney, but they figure if they say it enough times, maybe some of us will actually come to believe it. Fat chance, Minister.

1640

What we have here is a suitable plot for a trilogy series on Murdoch Mysteries. The mystery, of course, is, whatever happened to the Premier's pledge to run a transparent administration? Part two of the Murdoch mystery would be, whatever happened to the Premier's plan to run a progressive agenda? The trilogy might wrap up with Inspector Murdoch wrestling with the devil to salvage political souls and developing some kind of Krazy Glue to put back together the broken promises of this Liberal administration. Speaker, I think you would make a pretty good Inspector William Murdoch. Maybe the Sergeant-at-Arms could star as Inspector Brackenreid. Maybe Mr. B, our senior legislative attendant, would make a great Constable Crabtree. We'd have the mystery all wrapped up in three episodes.

I mean, seriously—this bill was written to give the minister the power to issue directives to the IESO and the OEB, telling them how to implement the minister's long-term energy plan. Let's change the name of this bill. Take a word out of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs—let's call this bill "the power grab bill." That's it; we're going to give all of the power to the minister. This is the power grab bill. So much for checks and balances. The way we do things now, when there's a plan to expand the system, the checks and balances come into the equation and public hearings are held and the public has a say; witnesses appear. The bill says, "Ah, no need for that, Eddie," and as quick as "Bob's your uncle," permission

is granted and the independent agencies are told to make it happen by order of the minister—you talk about an energy czar, one-stop shopping.

Speaker, the government would have us believe this is a necessity as we move forward. There's that trust issue again, that blind faith we're expected to buy into. It's like that old saying, "We're here from the government and we're here to help"—right up there with "the cheque is in the mail."

One of the first things the Premier did when she set her mind to privatizing Hydro One was to hand a \$4-million salary to the person she chose to run it for her—four million bucks, a hell of a lot of money.

If that wasn't enough, there's a kicker. I didn't realize it until I heard the parliamentary assistant to the energy minister, the member for Mississauga-Streetsville, speak in the House the other day. He talked about hydro needing private sector discipline. He went on to say that's why hefty salaries are necessary: so you attract qualified people. And here's the rub, at least to me: The minister's parliamentary assistant then waxed on about the added bonuses that would be available if the new Hydro One bosses met their performance targets. As if \$4 million wasn't enough, we learned there will be bonuses if performance targets are met—let alone that these are the guys who will be setting their own performance targets.

Speaker, you tell me: How do you meet performance targets in the private sector? Right you are; you bring in more profit for the shareholder. And how do you do that? Right on; you either cut services or see that the rates go up, or both. Raise the rates and—Bob's your uncle—performance targets are met and bonus money pours into that \$4-million bank account. Nice work if you can get it. It won't be New Democrats or the Conservatives getting it. Actually, who will be getting it—in the neck—will be the customers of Hydro One. This bill will see to that. It strips away the independent oversight in the guise of streamlining efficiency. It puts the decision-making and the long-term planning in the office of the new energy czar, the Minister of Energy.

Speaker, there's a trust factor in this bill. If the government wanted to earn our trust, they would have submitted their plan to sell Hydro One for a review in front of the Ontario Energy Board, and they would have gone along with us when we called for a referendum.

I tell you, I have too many people in my riding who are forced to rely on electric baseboard heating, and their hydro rates are soaring. They can't afford to pay any more, and this bill will take away their input into the public hearings where witnesses under oath would have had to justify their proposed energy plan for the future. That's the trust factor, and the government falls short on meeting the standard in this proposed legislation.

Thank you for your time, Speaker.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to speak in favour of Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act. This

act does a number of things, but one of the things it does is it enshrines a long-term energy planning process that is transparent and efficient and able to respond quickly to the need to change policy.

One of the things in the energy sector is that it's undergone tremendous transformations in the past few years as we've gotten rid of coal and moved to other forms of energy. One actually does need to be rather nimble about long-term energy plans. The legislated process that currently exists is known as the integrated power system plan process and it's really interesting that that process never actually works all the way through because it's very long, very cumbersome. What has actually happened is that in the last couple of rounds, in 2010 and 2013, we used a different process called the long-term energy plan process, which was able to get revisions to the long-term energy plan much more quickly, and that's the process we would be enshrining in legislation.

It does involve consultation. Let me tell you about the 2013 process. It included posting the LTEP discussion document on the Environmental Registry, then there were 12 regional sessions, including round table discussions with stakeholders and open houses for the public. There were 10 sessions with our aboriginal partners. There was an academic innovation session where people came in and talked about new ideas, innovative ideas. We received 7,883 questionnaire responses. So contrary to what you're being told, this is a very consultative process that we're enshrining.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise and comment on the speech by the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. He raised a number of issues that certainly the members of the PC caucus do agree with, and certainly a matter of trust is one of them. We have an issue with a minister having total control as to what he is trying to do with the energy file.

It's interesting: I hear comments every once in a while about the minister responsible for poverty reduction in this province. The member from Windsor-Tecumseh brought up what could be a \$4-million salary for the top dog at Hydro One. That certainly helps him with his poverty reduction strategy; it certainly doesn't help those who really need help in this province. These exorbitant, huge salaries they're giving out to some executives in this province make people in my riding certainly wonder what is going on with this poverty reduction strategy when these types of things happen.

I think the member from Windsor-Tecumseh also brought up issues that since the minister will have so much power here and does not have to take recommendations from anybody, the way this bill is written, to make policy in this province on the energy file, and does not have to disclose to anybody, unless he wants to, if there are any public proceedings—well, they would be public proceedings—that leads us to believe there could be things that are hidden in his consultations that he

doesn't want to listen to, and we'll never know. Openness and transparency certainly will be thrown out the door.

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

1650

Ms. Cindy Forster: The Ontario Energy Board is supposed to be independent and a regulatory authority. But this Bill 135 is actually just undermining the role of the Ontario Energy Board. I can tell you, Speaker, I've been around long enough—I sat on my local distribution company back in the early 2000s when hydro was first deregulated under the Tory government: billions in costs to local distribution companies, at that time, to get ready for deregulation, which then ended about a year after they spent billions of taxpayers' dollars. Then we had the \$2-billion gaffe on smart meters in 2006, and most recently, over the last two weeks, we've been hearing about up to \$4 million for the new head of hydro, millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to negotiate the IPO, as opposed to the shareholders being affixed those costs, at the end of the day, when the market opened.

Then we had Ed Clark, who wasn't charging us anything to do any of this hydro issue, but his panel of consultants got seven million taxpayers' dollars, and this year we're selling off 15%. All the while, the people who are paying the freight, the taxpayers, many of them in the north and in other places across this province, will have to either pay the hydro bill to heat their houses or make a choice of whether they're going to eat or go to their local food bank so they can actually heat their homes. So, I think this bill doesn't do anything to improve the lives of the people who actually pay the bills around here.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to provide comments on the remarks by my colleague from Windsor-Tecumseh, and begin by correcting a flat-out error that he made. He directly said, in reference to Hydro One, that the CEO would earn incentives over and above \$4 million. Let me read to him from the original Hydro One prospectus: "Chief executive officer base salary: \$850,000." That's a pretty good salary. Let me read, as well, some of the comments made on that in the Hydro One prospectus: "The target total direct pay for the chief executive officer for 2016 is positioned close to the average of the four other large utilities (although Hydro One is the largest of them all based on the various metrics noted ...), and is in the bottom quartile"—in other words, the lower 25%—"of the Smaller Subgroup" of the Standard and Poor's/Toronto Stock Exchange 60. "Similarly, the target total direct pay for the chief financial officer is in the bottom quartile of the Smaller Subgroup" of the Standard and Poor's/Toronto Stock Exchange 60, and so on and so forth.

So, Speaker, if the member had not actually read it, he certainly does deserve to correct his record in responding to the House. And if the member has read it, then the member has been reckless with regard to his use of information about executive compensation at Hydro One.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Windsor—Tecumseh. You have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I was referring directly to the Hansard quotations of the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, who talked about performance bonuses when he spoke to the House last week. That's all I was referring to. He's the guy who brought it up. Go back and read Hansard. You'll educate yourself.

Look, this is the same old gang that brought us gas plant scandals, the Ornge air ambulance fiasco, the eHealth boondoggle, smart meters that cost twice as much as estimated—fire hazards, in some cases—and now they are selling hydro without consulting the public. It's like someone woke up one morning and said, "Hey, let's get the old band back together. We'll sing the same old tune: 'We're from the government. We're here to help.'" I would rather hear "R-E-S-P-E-C-T." Let's have some respect for Ontario taxpayers and try to improve this bill, Speaker. That's the trust issue here.

Not one of those Liberals can look you in the eye and say, "When I campaigned in the last election, I went door to door and said, 'Vote for me, and I'll sell Ontario Hydro.' I did. I did. I really, really did." No, you did not. Nobody over there said they were going to sell hydro when they campaigned on the doorstep for a vote. Not one of those members went and said, "Vote for me, and I'll sell hydro." Now—now—they're saying that hydro is too important to be left in the hands of the public and we have to give it to the private interests.

You know what? It's really too much of a burden to put on the shoulders of one minister. We have the Ontario Energy Board; we have the IESO. Let them do what they were set up to do. Let them come up with a long-term energy plan, and let them tell us what is in the best interest of taxpayers. Don't leave it. It's the Murphy's law of administration over there: If something can go wrong, it will go wrong with this government.

Thank you for your time.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm very pleased to rise today on Bill 135, the energy conservation and long-term planning act.

I do question the words "long-term planning act," because I would have to suspect the only excuse this government might have is that they haven't done any long-term planning. Every time we turn around, there's a new long-term energy plan. When you're talking about plans that take decades to build, I don't know how a plan can last a year before it has to be revised, unless it's being, basically, done from the hip, shooting off directives. I understand that the minister has issued, what, 30-some ministerial directives since his short tenure as Minister of Energy. That clearly shows lack of direction. I guess it would probably clearly show that we're just going in circles. That's what we're seeing when we look at our energy bills.

I had a discussion with a farmer up at the OFA the other night. They were talking about how they used to be involved in a dairy operation. You can imagine: They had bulk tanks cooling milk, compressors, fans in the barn, a stable cleaner, lots of light, lots of work around the barn. Their energy bills are higher now than when they milked. He said, "I don't understand it. How can it be like that?" You can imagine that your business operates at a higher voltage, a lot of demand, and they're now in their home with—probably they have cash crops. That's consistent. That wouldn't have changed. But how could it be the same? Only because the rates have gone so high.

I guess, if they were businesses that were portable—if you're manufacturing cars—where you could move, they likely would have moved. But when you're farming, you have to use the land you have. You can't move. That's what we're seeing. That's why we see so many of our manufacturing jobs gone, because the regulation and the cost of electricity has skyrocketed to a point where they can't afford to be competitive. It's not that they wouldn't want to work here and provide jobs here, but if they did, the cost of their product would be so high, nobody would buy it. That's the problem: not that they don't want to be here, but they can't afford to be here. We see that in so many things.

I was actually at a Grey Cup party last night. Of course, I'm right down in the corner of the province and we have relatives and friends in Quebec. One of the residents was laughing at me because, he said, "You know, we used to have a province here that basically the North American municipal governments used to laugh at for being inefficient. You guys have taken over first place on this." He says that they've now eliminated their deficit, years before they actually projected, and they're laughing at us in Ontario because ours has gone out of hand—and much, much later than it was ever projected years ago.

Of course, this is a government that back in 2003, their leader at the time signed a document saying he would never run a deficit, never borrow money. Look at where we are today. We're actually to the point where we're having trouble servicing our debt. We're over \$11 billion. You can imagine what it would be like if the interest rates were the same rate under the previous Mike Harris government. It was up around 10% to 14% at the time. What would our interest be? At that time, it was getting to be as large—just a little bit less—than health care. This is the way you've run the government. They've taken the debt and doubled it.

You know, I look back at my—I had a bill in September at our house. I guess I have to apologize as I do have a swimming pool. Five hundred dollars for a hydro bill—\$500. Two people living there and their daughter—but how can a residential bill get to that size?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It must be a mistake.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Somebody said that it must be a mistake, but, of course, under this government, there have been a lot of mistakes made, and hydro is one of them.

1700

In talking about the salaries across here, yes, you can talk about the rate and trying to compare it, but we did compare it. Quebec hydro, which is double the size, is less than an eighth of the cost that they're paying this fellow to run Hydro One. At one time, this was a very proud organization. These guys have run it into the ground. They've overridden the Ontario Energy Board with making decisions that weren't in keeping—they weren't granting some of the pay increases these guys were granting. They turned down the increases, so what happens? This legislation takes them out of the equation. If the minister wants to do something now, he can do this without any worry about the OEB or the IESO actually being able to comment, because he's now in control of them.

We saw that with the Auditor General. He's removed power from the Ombudsman. The oversight over Hydro One is gone. You might wonder: Why would you do that in an open and transparent government? Because I really heard a lot of that in the last election—how you're going to be open and transparent. So why are they removing the power from the people?

When I saw the Auditor General's report from last December when it came out, it was embarrassing for this government, to the point where they tried to ridicule the credentials of the auditor. Of course, the public laughed at that, because it had much more experience than the minister did. So what did they do? "Well, we don't want any more of those reports, so we'll remove her oversight over the file."

We're waiting to see—last year, they kind of timed it for the day before we rose for Christmas break. It was a good time for the Auditor General's report. We'll see this year how late it comes. Obviously, they'd rather those reports come out when there's nobody to ask questions, because, again, they are embarrassing. And they should be, for what we've seen happen here.

I think it's important. We need to sit back and look at this electricity plan, look at our energy plan. We're talking about the Premier being over now at the climate change conference. We need to have an energy plan that works for this country. I'm a little bit worried that they're going to want to be a leader in some of the reductions we have. You've got to remember, we're a province that is already off most—we're servicing our electrical needs with nuclear power and with water power for something like over 85% of our needs. You can't expect us to have the same easy reductions as you might in China, where most of their electricity is generated by coal—and most of the world.

We've already done a lot of work. There's no question more needs to be done, but we have to take into—some of the ideas. We can't do what's already been done. We can't take credit for something that's already been done. The Conservative governments of the past built an electricity system on nuclear power and water power, foresight that really—we have a system that doesn't create the problems that many of the others have. Sure,

we had some coal. We had a plan to get rid of the coal, and the Liberals followed through on it—not in the four years that they promised, but in 12 years they were able to get off coal. There needs to be more consideration done when you're affecting the lives of so many people.

I look at some of the scandals we've had. We talked about the hydro salaries. The member opposite talked about trusting them: Why don't we trust their documents? Since I've been here—it's only been a short period of four years—we see some of the things they asked us to trust them on. Ornge: They hid that for years until finally the story broke in the paper—an embarrassment, a police investigation. Next were the gas plants. They told us they cost a fraction of actually what they were. Of course, the Auditor General embarrassed them again with figures that showed that there were over a billion dollars in costs.

The next thing, we find out that records go missing. You know, what is this about transparency when you go in—and the information officer was very clear that either the records were deleted or you're running a government that's not in the spirit of democracy. You have to have records. There have to be checks and balances. This government did everything they could to make sure those checks and balances were gone, and now we see more actions through this bill here where it does more of that.

I think the people of Ontario expect more. They expect a government that is transparent and fair and, I guess, smart enough to put together a plan that would be good for the economy and good for the people of this province, and instead of being forced into cutting back some of the health care services we used to have—I wish I had more time, but it's a plan that we see, every time we turn around, there's just more and more and more issues.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry raises some good points around the track record of this government. I think that we just need to get it very clearly on the record as to what Bill 135 does do.

They are officially, with this piece of legislation, abandoning once and for all the vision of an independent and transparent long-term energy planning and approval process, one that had been established back in 2004. By removing their planning and approval authority and relegating the OEB and IESO to the role of implementing the government's plans, it would become even easier for private interests to lobby the government to approve costly and risky energy projects without being subject to independent public scrutiny. That's the intent of this piece of legislation.

The member did address a little bit about the trust piece, but I also think it's important to note that for the third time in a year, this government is using a progressive policy—in this case, energy efficiency improvements—to embed or bury changes that upend electricity policy in Ontario without public review and with unknown impact.

You don't have to take our word for it; the stakeholders have weighed in. Energy consultant and lawyer George Vegh wrote a thorough review of the governance changes in Bill 135. He says very clearly, "It could lead one to wonder whether there are any checks and balances left in the system at all." I think the member makes it very clear that if there were ever a government that needed checks and balances on the electricity file, it is this one, and through this legislation they are removing that from themselves. The people of this province are going to pay the price for that, no doubt.

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: The part of this bill that I really am interested in is conservation. One of our government's key goals is energy conservation. Conservation helps families and businesses to save money on their energy bills, reduces the need to build expensive energy infrastructure, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, creating a cleaner future for our children and our grandchildren. As an educator, that interests me a lot. I do have two grandchildren, although they are both adults now, 24 and 21. But let me tell you, I have to be talking to them about conservation all the time. When they come home from university and bring everything they've worn in the last three months, they start to do the wash in the washing machine during the daytime. I have to speak to them and say—

Ms. Catherine Fife: At peak hours?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: At peak hours. I speak to them and tell them, "You know what? When you're sitting and playing your games at night or doing whatever you are doing, put in a load and go back and get it later, as the rest of the family does." We do all of our washing in the evening.

When you go out to buy appliances, those stickers on the front used to be nice stickers and you didn't pay much attention. The good news is that we will be working to make sure the standard for energy-consuming products and appliances would set water efficiency standards for appliances that consume both energy and water, like dishwashers and washing machines, allowing Ontarians to make the best choices for themselves when shopping for appliances.

I agree with this bill. I look forward to further debate.

1710

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to rise today to comment on Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning.

I'd like to acknowledge the comments by my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. He did a really good job articulating the problems we have in Ontario today on the energy file. I know when I was up in his riding at the plowing match, many of his constituents, like mine in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, complained a lot about the energy file in this province. They

know that this government is on the wrong path and has been for a very long time.

Of course, the issues I hear regarding energy, first and foremost, is the fact that energy prices are going up every time you turn around. We know, in the long-term energy plan, that rates are set to rise almost 45% prior to 2018. Like our leader, Patrick Brown, has said, people are actually choosing between heating their home and eating. I think that's a sad state of affairs here in the province of Ontario, when government policy has forced people to make that type of choice.

Of course, in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex I continue to hear about the Green Energy Act. Recently there was another round of announcements regarding the forced wind turbines across rural Ontario and in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. The people know that this is driving energy prices up. It's forcing small businesses in my riding, seniors and families to hardly be able to afford to keep the lights on.

One story I just want to get on the record is that I have a small grocery store in my riding. Last year its hydro bill was \$8,500 for the month of September; this year it was \$10,000. That's what the Liberal government has done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to stand in the House and reply to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I did listen intently to his remarks. I agreed with the vast majority of them. I particularly enjoyed the part where he talked about the problems that farmers, specifically dairy farmers, face paying Ontario's hydro bills.

I have, I guess, the pleasure of living on the Quebec border. I know specifically that at this point in time farmers across the five eastern provinces get paid exactly the same for their milk based on their components. The people on the Quebec side are making more money, and quite a bit more because dairy farming is very energy-intensive—you have to milk the cows, cool the milk and ventilate the barn. Cows, for a lot of people who might not know, have very weak respiratory systems. They're very, very prone to pneumonia. The way to overcome that is to have a very good ventilation system. That's the way to overcome that.

A very good ventilation system costs money to run because most of them, for dairy farming 101—I like talking about dairy farming. There are two ways to ventilate a barn well: Natural ventilation where curtains go up and down, or tunnel ventilation where you put big fans on one end of the barn, and the warmer it gets, the faster the fans go. They're both effective and they both cost money. You can very well see, because dairy farmers do studies on how much it costs to produce milk, and at this point Quebec farmers are making more money for a couple of reasons; and one big one is that their hydro is half what Ontario's is. That speaks for itself because it wasn't always like that. That's something we have to keep in mind.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return now to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Barrie, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I think the member from Kitchener–Waterloo talked about the checks and balances and how this bill has removed them, along with other things this government has removed, whether it be the Auditor General, the OEB. We see more and more checks and balances in the system, and unfortunately, the long-term energy plans are anything but.

The member from Barrie talked about conservation. One of the issues that I'm a little worried about is that we don't have enough people using the power we generate today. You could shut down all your green energy, and we'd still have a surplus.

I was talking to a farmer, not in my riding but in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. It was cheaper for him to put a generator in and produce his own three-phase power. That was power that normally would have been bought from Ontario Hydro. More and more farmers are looking at this and looking at it being cheaper now to get off the grid. Who's going to pay for the grid? The grid is a sunk cost. They've got to be paid for. I guess this bill will allow them to outlaw people like farmers buying power cheaper than they can get it from the grid. If you look at that, some of these things that it's talking about would make that illegal, or could make it illegal.

So here we are. I've heard that some of the larger businesses looking at staying in Ontario are going to have to generate their own power. This would control that. Unfortunately, it talks to a bigger problem, and that's the cost of energy. If you can produce power off the grid on a one-shot small installation, what does that say for the economies of scale that should be there? They aren't there.

We look at the trouble with farmers. Farmers in our province have a lot of extra costs. Whether it be energy or whether it be the regulations around pesticides, they're making it very hard to do business in this province. I guess with farmers you can do that. They can't take their land with them. But it's a problem for businesses, and they've left.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House, and today to add my remarks to the record for Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning. I must say, it's not one of their flashier titles, but this is a very concerning bill.

We hear a lot from the government side about how they're very interested in the conservation part of this bill. The conservation part is actually very small. It's kind of the first paragraph. If you take the explanatory notes, it's the first paragraph in the explanatory notes. It

basically puts a bigger focus on being able to monitor energy use in buildings—not only energy, but also water.

I'm not opposed to the principle, but one of the members on the other side talked about energy-efficient washing machines. The one thing that people are forgetting—again, I'm going to go back to agriculture. One of our bigger energy users in agriculture is greenhouses. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh would know a lot about greenhouses. They use a lot of energy, and they're big buildings. They might come under this regulation, that they're going to monitor how much energy they're using.

Something that someone from the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance brought up to me—it's a very good point, and I think it should go on the record again—is that to truly measure how energy-efficient something is, you have to also measure the production. You could have two greenhouses, Greenhouse A and Greenhouse B, of the same size. Greenhouse A might use more water, more electricity and more gas than Greenhouse B, and you would say, "Oh, that's very inefficient. We've got to clamp down on Greenhouse A." But Greenhouse A might be producing a third more production than Greenhouse B, and actually, per unit produced, Greenhouse A would be much more efficient.

That's something that we have to always keep in mind: It's not just with the washing machine. If you're going to put regulations in—and the greenhouse industry is worried, and they have every right to be, and a lot of other industries should be worried. If you're going to talk about energy conservation, you also have to talk about the unit of production from that energy. I think that's something that this government hasn't really put a lot of thought into. So that's the conservation part of this bill.

The electricity part of this bill is basically that this bill takes the onus from the IESO and the OEB and puts it on the minister. We'll use the OEB as an example. The OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, when it looks at a project, is supposed to look to make sure that one of the criteria is that the project is good for the people of Ontario, good for the population; that the overall population will benefit from this project. That's a good thing. We have our issues with the OEB sometimes, but that is one of their main roles. This legislation takes that role and makes it a secondary role. The first role of the OEB will be to listen to the minister. So the first decision regarding energy on big projects won't necessarily be for the good of the people. It will be a political decision.

1720

We've had those political decisions in the past. I think smart meters were a political decision. It sounded good. They didn't really think about how it would work, and the results have been very questionable, specifically, I'd say, in northern Ontario.

I'd like to get a plug in for my part of the world. We had a lot of trouble with smart meters in the great riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane. At one point—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: They work in my house.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm glad they work in Barrie, but they don't work in a lot of Timiskaming. The reason we were given by Hydro One is—and they worked with us really well at the end, but at the start it was really difficult working with them. The Ombudsman's office helped us a lot. But one of the reasons they gave us is that they don't read well where there are obstacles like rocks and trees. In northern Ontario—surprise, surprise—there are a lot of rocks and trees. So somebody didn't really do their due diligence and find out where these things were going to work. Why? Because it was a political decision.

This also refers to The Green Energy Act. We support the Green Energy Act. We support green energy in principle. But what happened was that the Green Energy Act superseded the Planning Act. So all the things you have to take into consideration when you plan in a province, in a municipality, were superseded by the Green Energy Act. And what did it cause? It caused mayhem.

I went through lots of planning processes when I built buildings on my farm. But if somebody wanted to build right now—if somebody wants to build a solar farm in Timiskaming—Cochrane, it's easier to build a solar farm in Timiskaming—Cochrane than it is to build a barn. Does that make any sense? Absolutely not. And that's going to be even worse with this bill.

There's something else that's really interesting with this bill.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: What's that?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Minister. Section 25.32.1 is enacted to specify that no plan, directive, direction or other document issued or provided under sections 25.29 to 25.32 is an undertaking to which the Environmental Assessment Act applies. So not only is this bill giving immense political power regarding energy decisions, it's also taking away a lot of the power of the Environmental Assessment Act. In my region, we've had lots of trouble with projects that have been exempted from the Environmental Assessment Act. And do you know what? Most companies—mining companies, forestry companies—comply because they know. They've got a good story to tell. They work hard. You would never get a mining company or a forestry company to say, "We want to be exempted from the Environmental Assessment Act."

Why does this government feel it's fine to exempt, possibly, their new private friends at Hydro One from the Environmental Assessment Act? Does that make sense to you, Speaker? It doesn't make sense to us at all. Why would this government undertake to remove a large portion of the electrical system from the Environmental Assessment Act?

I think I marked it in yellow here where exactly—it's 25.29. It's quite a bit of the bill, Speaker, that's going to be exempted under the Environmental Assessment Act. Again, it's like going back to the Green Energy Act. The Green Energy Act superseded the Planning Act, and that was the problem. The Planning Act also has its problems, but it has a reason.

The NDP corner of the House is not against regulation. We're against bad regulation, and we're also against removing regulations for no apparent reason. What this government is doing is removing—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Ernie's your uncle.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, Ernie is my uncle, and that's why I'm NDP. I tell him that all the time. He's also my favourite uncle.

Mr. Bill Walker: Today.

Mr. John Vanthof: Every day.

What this government is doing is it's claiming to be open and progressive. For election campaigns, it's open and progressive; as soon as the campaign is over, they privatize faster than the Tories. The Tories would never get away with selling Hydro One, truth be told, and these guys are getting away with it; and now every bill that we see come before this House regarding energy is removing more and more regulation from the energy sector.

First, they privatize a big portion of the energy sector because they need to pay the bills; that has become very evident. This has got nothing to do with transit, this has got to do with paying the credit card balance; and, now, with several of these bills, they're taking environmental regulations out of the picture. This is not what an open, progressive government should do, and those of us in the NDP are extremely disappointed that this government is taking these actions.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me pleasure to spend a couple of minutes on the passionate speech from the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane.

My first part of the comments is basically that, in general, it seems that this side of the House does everything wrong every day. The challenge is that I haven't heard a better suggestion from the other side. So, yes, we're in government, we're not perfect, but folks, just remember: I haven't heard a suggestion about what you would do. It's fine to criticize, but when constituents come to my office, they normally have an issue—whatever that issue is—and they do speak. So then I say, "Tell me how you'd fix it." I welcome their input. I haven't heard any input from the other side when we talk about selling Hydro One.

I was around in the municipal sector when there was a whole bunch of downloading to the municipalities. That's why I'm here. I remember when they gave away the 407.

So let's be realistic. Give us some good suggestions, not just because you're in opposition, and you just want to oppose—I understand that.

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You're against protecting the environment; is that what I hear? I hear from the member across that they're frankly dead set against the environment.

I would say, bring some good stuff to the table, except whine, whine, whine every day; because that's all we hear—and I understand that's why you're there, but let's be constructive.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 135. I agree with the member from New Liskeard. He articulates things well and he's bang-on.

This bill is nothing but a bit of window dressing to fine-tune a few things, which is creating more red tape that we don't need in Ontario, to justify a faulty program overall that this party has delivered to us. We have the most expensive electricity in North America, which is driving out jobs, which is impoverishing the people that live here; and they're at a point where they can barely afford the electricity to heat their homes, for the lower-income people.

When we become a government that forgets to look after people, we forget what our job is. The job of government is to help people, not things. These people are looking after things. They forgot their job.

The sale of Hydro One is a mistake: We keep the debt, we sell the assets for a fraction of what they're worth and we lose the profitability that comes along with Hydro One that it would deliver in the future, as the Financial Accountability Officer articulated to us about a week or two ago when he gave us his report.

1730

We can move on to the green energy part of their energy policy, and overall that is the biggest financial fiasco that has ever happened in North America, and that's why we have the most expensive electricity in North America. We don't need wind power or solar power to have green power. We could have bought it from our neighbours in Quebec at a reasonable price. We chose not to do that. We sole-sourced contracts to Korea to buy power at an exorbitant price that we can't afford, and here we are in an unfixable mess. We get to keep the debt. We have to sell Hydro One to pay for the Green Energy Act and impoverish our people. What a failed experiment and what bad government.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane. Every time he gets on his feet on a bill, he comes at it from the perspective of a farmer or somebody from the agricultural sector. Speaker, we can actually apply those words that he says to every business, every agency here in Ontario. It actually just puts it into perspective so that it makes sense, so people can actually understand it.

To the member from Barrie, who talked about mothers playing on their computers and that they could just throw in a load of washing in the evening in between games on the computer, I would say to her that many of the people who live in my riding are actually working their second job in the evening, actually trying to make enough money in their minimum wage jobs, because of the positions we find ourselves in here in the province; that they aren't even home in the evening to throw a load of laundry in the washing machine between 7 and 11. Others, of course, are out with their kids, perhaps involved in some

activities, like jiu-jitsu and skating and those kinds of things. After they've worked all day, they frankly don't want to do a load of laundry at 7 o'clock at night.

To the member from Northumberland—Quinte West, who talked about us never having any good ideas: Well, we ram all these bills through to committee, and when we get there we hear from the deputations and 36 hours later we're at clause-by-clause. We can't get a Hansard to save our soul to even put forward any amendments. I would say, through you, Mr. Speaker, to that member that we need to hire some more staff here in the Legislature. If the government is going to continue to ram all this stuff through, then we need more staff to actually provide opposition parties with the information we need to make some amendments and some good ideas to bring forward to the government.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member for Timiskaming—Cochrane sounds more like his uncle every day. A lot of people out there may not know that his uncle is the member for Oxford—the riding that used to be called Oxford—which is Ernie Hardeman. It's hard to discern which one is which when they get up to speak because the more he speaks in the House, the more he sounds like his uncle. Now, there's nothing wrong with that, but it is strange to have the so-called right wing and the so-called left wing agreeing with each other so often. But I digress from this.

What this bill is designed to do is to assist in finding ways of conserving energy—conserving water, as well—and that's exceedingly important. The member for Windsor, in the barracks in the back row, used to be very good when he was with the CBC, I might say. I always admired him then. But his own member from Toronto—Danforth is saying that conservation is the route we should be taking. This government now, in this legislation and through the regulatory framework, will in fact be encouraging, in a very strong way, energy conservation in this province. To assist overall, because of course there's a conference going on in Paris at this time dealing with global warming, first of all, dealing with that. There are a lot of deniers of global warming sitting across from me—I understand that—not in the NDP, but in the Conservative ranks. They're deniers of global warming.

But one of the things that energy conservation does is contribute to the effort to reduce the factors which contribute to global warming and, at the same time, to try to make it more cost-efficient for people to absorb and use energy.

I enjoyed the member's speech very much, though, as I always do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I return to the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane for his reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank all of my colleagues and the members for their comments. I'm actually proud of my Uncle Ernie. We differ on views, but we both have very strong principles.

But in this bill, there's very little about conservation. It's mostly about trying to—they are selling Hydro One, so now they've got to change a bunch of legislation to actually get this done and help their political friends. That's what this bill is about. It's got a little bit of conservation. As whip of the party, we have a lot of people who want to speak to this. But often when bills like this are time-allocated, the public—because the committee is also very time-allocated. This time, I'm going to be the last speaker from our side, and hopefully this time the government will actually allow this bill to go through a real, true committee process so that the people who want to talk about—"I don't want to talk about conservation"—what is actually happening in our energy sector in this province are actually given the chance.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Longer than four minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right. This should have a full committee process. This government has got the chance to do this right now, and we hope they take this opportunity to actually let this bill go a natural way so that we have a full committee process.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to rise today to speak for 10 minutes on Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a good debate this afternoon, very interesting. I know all members of the House have enjoyed this riveting debate on Bill 135.

I especially enjoyed listening to the deputy House leader for the government. I, in fact, remember serving him water as a legislative page about 25 years ago. Shortly after I arrived here as an MPP, after 2011, the member from St. Catharines said that he enjoyed me more when I served him water as a legislative page than as an opposition member, and I rise today to say that the feelings are mutual. But with all due respect, I always enjoy listening to the member from St. Catharines and his input into the debate. Of course, I vote him the best heckler in the House.

Back to Bill 135: Whenever this government takes action on energy, it is, quite frankly, a nerve-racking experience for the people of Ontario. When we look at Ontario's energy sector today, there really isn't anything to smile about. Hydro bills are higher here than anywhere in North America, and the government is going ahead with the sale of Hydro One, which practically no one in the province wants. I know other members have cited public opinion surveys showing that about 80% of everyday people in province are opposed to the sale of Hydro One.

Mr. Speaker, every time this Liberal government touches energy, our wallets get quite a bit lighter and we lose transparency on how our energy system works and who it actually benefits. The people of this province are left to decipher global adjustments, never-ending debt retirement, and what a majority share of a hydro company means for their bottom line in the government's muddled messaging on energy conservation.

When I did a two-minute speech, some feedback earlier on in this debate, I talked about this grocery store in my riding. Last September, in 2014, his hydro bill was \$8,500 per month; it's now \$10,000 this past September. And if that's happening for a small business in my riding, think of the large manufacturers, the large employers in this province. That's why Ontario, under this Liberal government, has become one of the most uncompetitive jurisdictions in all of North America—a sad day for the people of this province.

1740

The Auditor General has determined that the global adjustment will have cost the people of this province \$50 billion by the end of this year—\$50 billion. Most people don't know what the global adjustment even is or what it actually represents. The Liberal government has been far from clear about it. This is one small thing people have to try to decode to understand the convoluted failure that is this Liberal government's handling of the energy file.

Another confusing thing here is that while the government is selling off Hydro One, they've got this bill, Bill 135, that we're debating here again today, to centralize all transmission and electricity sector planning with the minister's political staff and cabinet, overriding the technocrats and industry experts at the IESO and the OEB. It's like they can't decide who is actually in charge of this ministry and this file. I'm finding that this centralization of power to cabinet is a common theme in many of the bills we're debating these days here.

Hon. James J. Bradley: In Ottawa.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: At Queen's Park. Ministerial discretion and the power of cabinet seem to be the order of the day. And as the member for St. Catharines talks about, yes, I agree that we're probably going to see this a lot in Ottawa as well.

Another thing this bill will do is amend the Electricity Act, 1998, and give the Minister of Energy, rather than the IESO, the responsibility for developing a long-term energy plan. The timing of this alongside the Hydro One sale is truly remarkable.

The Financial Accountability Officer, as most MPPs know in this House, is an independent authority and has made it perfectly clear that the Hydro One sale is terrible long-term planning. He said it's going to be good news next year, but as we go down the road, the news is going to get worse and worse, because this government is focused on short-term gains for their own political ends.

As the National Post put it clearly, "In simple, blunt terms, LeClair explained that the Liberals' plan to sell off 60% of Hydro One, the provincial power distributor, will cost far more than it brings in. While it may provide a short-term benefit to the government by helping it balance the budget in time for the next election, the gains will be brief while the costs run on indefinitely." And this is who is going to be in charge of developing a long-term energy plan? I'm guessing "long-term" in this context means until the spring of 2018. I doubt they have any interest in looking any further down the road than that.

The Green Energy Act is another fine example of this government's qualifications for long-term energy plan-

ning. The former Environmental Commissioner has made it very clear that the environmental gains are dubious at best; we have all seen what has happened to our hydro bills; and any one of my constituents in Lambton–Kent–Middlesex can tell you about how detrimental wind turbines have been for our rural communities.

This bill promises that the government will consult with consumers, distributors, generators, transmitters and aboriginal peoples, but there is no requirement that the long-term energy plan be reviewed by the OEB, as was the case previously with respect to the Integrated Power System Plan.

This government loves to say it will consult and have conversations about everything, but there is no real weight to that, as people are clearly seeing now. It's intentionally vague. In reality, it means they can enact things just by the will of what this government wants to do unilaterally.

The act would also give the minister the authority to enhance the scope of the long-term energy plan goals and objectives respecting, among other things, "air emissions from the energy sector, taking into account any projections respecting the emission of greenhouse gases developed with the assistance of the IESO." Again, Speaker, we see vague and open legislation that empowers the minister and the minister's office. The minister will be making the plan and will also be empowered to issue directives to the IESO and to the OEB to implement this plan.

Bill 135 essentially cleans up some of the older statutes and aligns, I think, government policies and programs. Again, it has this implementation or this signal that it's sending, that the minister and the staff are going to really control the future of energy in this province. I think we're going to see more political decisions in the energy file, and that's bad for the people of this province.

I just want to talk about some other things when we talk about the energy file over the last 12 or 13 years in Ontario, apart from hydro bills going up and the Hydro One sale that the majority of people in this province are against. I touched on the Green Energy Act and what it has done to communities that I represent. People are adamantly opposed to these wind turbines being forced on their communities. I started speaking about this earlier. There are a large number of contracts being awarded, and construction is set to begin across southwestern Ontario. People in communities in southwestern Ontario and across the province are opposed, not just because they're forced by the Liberals in downtown Toronto; but it's what the renewable projects are costing businesses, families and seniors. In fact, one statistic I heard said that the cost of wind turbines alone is going to hit \$60 billion over 20 years—\$60 billion. If that's not accurate, I'd like the government to stand up and refute that and tell us what it's actually going to cost. We know it's one of the single biggest drivers of electricity bills going up.

We know that by 2018 hydro bills are set to go up by 42%. That's according to the Liberals' own long-term

energy plan. Again, it's sending a signal to employers out there that Ontario, under this Liberal government, is very uncompetitive.

The list goes on. Smart meters, as a number of MPPs have talked about—the smart meter scandal.

One thing that wasn't mentioned was the Liberals' pensions at OPG—lifelong pensions; some of them \$800,000 per year.

People in the province are sick and tired of the mishandling of this energy file.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks to the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. He touched a little bit on the consumer protection side of the equation, which is where I'd like to focus on, but also about the serious, serious disconnect that this government has around energy and conservation, because there's so little in this bill that actually would focus on conservation.

It's really interesting, because in 2008, then Liberal MPP Phil McNeely tabled Bill 101, which was the Home Energy Rating Act. In 2013, he brought another motion forward, where he debated a private member's motion indicating that energy labelling related to the energy efficiency of new and existing houses at time of sale should be enacted by the end of 2014. The NDP has spoken in support of making available to prospective Ontario homebuyers information with respect to energy efficiency at home—but what a missed opportunity to actually build energy efficiency into future homes, for instance.

That's why today, in my statement, I talked about RenewABILITY Energy Inc. They have drain water heat recovery technology, which actually should be built into all new homes because it's incredible. The consumption and carbon emissions can be reduced by up to 10% every day. They use a Power-Pipe. It's easily retrofitted into homes and easily installed in new buildings, and it requires no maintenance. But what happens? The energy code credits for this technology are available in Ontario, but they're not mandatory. They're mandatory in Manitoba. So you connect a good, progressive idea on conservation and on energy saving, and then you ignore it, even though you say that conservation is a priority. I think that a company like RenewABILITY Energy, which is doing amazing business outside of Ontario—I think this government should get out of the way and let them do their job. That's what I think.

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

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It gives me pleasure to rise today and talk about Bill 135, the Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

One of the things that I do want to bring to the attention of the House is a comment that was made by the opposition party: that you're tired of the mishandling of the energy file. We can say whatever we want in this Legislature, but I just want to bring to the attention of those who are listening that we are the first jurisdiction in North America to get rid of coal-fired plants.

1750

No matter how we cut this bill, this is the most important piece of legislation and the most important act that has happened. We've taken many, many—how many cars off the road?—millions of cars off the road, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. That is one of the major things that we need to keep in mind. We've saved billions of dollars, or we will save billions of dollars, in health care costs, so it's really important that we keep this in perspective.

Outside of the many different conservation measures in this bill, there are very significant, positive things. The energy and water reporting and benchmarking initiative for large buildings is extremely important. We lose a lot of energy through our buildings. The water efficiency standards for energy-consuming products and appliances—I know in my household, as well, I've got two teenage girls. It's a nightmare to try and keep the water conservation under wraps and it's something that with the advent of good technology, new technology, we need to keep pushing and focusing on. So I'm pleased to stand and support this bill.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It is a pleasure to add my comments to my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. Not only is he an MPP who stands up and listens to his constituents, but he and his family are long-time, good small-to-medium business owners, so they're living this nightmare every day of the year.

He brought up hydro increases. We just had one on November 1. The people out there listening and watching are going to get one again on January 1; 42% by 2018. People are going to realize more increases in their energy.

He talked about a grocery store going from \$8,500 a month to \$10,000 a month. In my riding, we have a great Canadian icon, Chapman's Ice Cream. They have a 160,000-square-foot warehouse that they have to refrigerate 24/7 with hydro. Just think of what this global adjustment is doing to a business like that, and they proudly employ 600 people.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West talked about, what could we offer them? What can we help them with? What they don't ever share with the public is that this Liberal government calls Niagara Falls and says, "Don't collect all that water"—our freest, cleanest, greenest form of power, and they're telling them not to do it so we can actually put highly subsidized wind turbines and solar energy on the grid.

He asked for some solutions and ideas. The first thing: Stop the further sale of Hydro One so that we don't take away that revenue source that we rely on.

Number two: Stand up and speak up for the people of Northumberland–Quinte West and don't take direction from the Premier on energy. I believe he actually believes in what we're talking about and he would vote if he were free to do so.

Put a moratorium on wind turbines and solar. We don't need any more energy. As my colleague from

Lambton–Kent–Middlesex said, we pay \$50 billion in global adjustment charges, and a half a billion a year to the States and Quebec to get rid of our surplus energy. We don't need any more right now. They killed the manufacturing sector. We don't need any more.

My colleague from Stormont–Dundas–Glengarry just reminded me that the PCs actually built nuclear, one of the most environmentally friendly forms of power we have, led by Premier William Davis. We need to continue to go down that path, Mr. Speaker, and make sure we're getting hydro rates that people can afford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Let me surprise my friends in the Liberal government and say to the member from Kingston and the Islands, thank you for getting rid of coal. Thank you for reminding us. You guys did a great job with that. Some of us really support it and we won't have coal-burning plants again. Thank you for what you've done for global warming.

To the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and the member from—I'm going to talk about Timiskaming–Cochrane a bit as well. But I wonder what our pages are getting out of all of this. Who knew when they came here that they were going to learn so much about the electrical grid in Ontario, hydro prices in Ontario? You'll go back to school and the teacher will say, "What did you learn?" You'll be able to go on and on and on for days talking about hydro prices in Ontario and how a certain government has messed up the system. Anyway, I digress.

I want to get back to something the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane said when he was talking about greenhouses. Down my way, greenhouses are a big thing. I was in a greenhouse the other day. You've got these little pods, right? They're about this big and cucumbers grow out of there, 15 feet to 20 feet high, and the owners experiment with different lighting. It's all computerized, how much water to put into the plant at any time of the day. Their water tanks—they recycle their water in there; it's all filtered—are huge, huge water tanks. When we talk about energy conservation, there's no one better at it than a modern greenhouse grower with computerized water recycling, water filtering and so on.

But they need more power down my way. They're getting a new transmission line. It won't be ready by 2018. It's already over-subscribed by people who want to tap into it two or three times more. There's a business case for more power for the greenhouse industry in Windsor and Essex county. They want to go 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, but the government won't give them the power to earn a living.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: A special thanks to the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Kingston and the Islands, and especially to my friend and colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound who, I might add, also has experience with the Home Hardware family. We hit it off

right off the bat. When we got here back in 2011, we shared some good old Home Hardware lumber stories. Of course, my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh continues to add to this debate and continues standing up for his constituents opposing the sale of Hydro One.

I would like to put on the record that the Liberals continue to forget this part of history. I was reminded of this when the member from Kingston and the Islands talked about the closure of coal plants. Everybody in this House should acknowledge the former Progressive Conservative government member from Kitchener–Waterloo, Elizabeth Witmer, who was Minister of Energy when we closed Lakeview in the province of Ontario. So kudos to the Progressive Conservative government of the past—I know, Mr. Speaker, you were a member of that government—and, of course, to my former colleague and our former colleague in the House Elizabeth Witmer.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound mentioned the small business that I come from, a Home Hardware Building Centre, auto and farm supply store

and an LCBO agency store, and the cost of electricity—and this is what reminded me of it.

Interjection: Shocking.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's shocking even in our business. I remember in the summer my dad saying to me that for the first time in the history of our company the hydro bill in July hit over \$8,000. I talked about the small grocery store in our riding that was \$8,500 last September; this September, it was \$10,000. That's the story that every MPP—I don't care what political stripe you are—is hearing right across this province. This government has to wake up and start standing up for everyday people, not the special interests in the province of Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 6:45 p.m. this evening.

The House recessed from 1758 to 1845.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London-Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington-Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
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)		
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell 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: 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 / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

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
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

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 / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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 / Greffière: 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: 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 / Greffière: 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

Continued from back cover

Rural Ontario

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6806
Blessed Cardinal Newman Catholic High School	
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	6806
Sports halls of fame	
Mr. Chris Ballard	6806
Visitors	
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	6807

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES / RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS

Standing Committee on Estimates

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	6807
Report deemed received.....	6807

Standing Committee on Social Policy

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	6807
Report adopted	6807

MOTIONS

House sittings

Hon. James J. Bradley	6807
Motion agreed to	6807

House sittings

Hon. James J. Bradley	6807
Motion agreed to	6808

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES

Lung health

Hon. Dipika Damerla	6808
Mr. Jeff Yurek.....	6808

Mme France Gélinas	6809
--------------------------	------

Private members' public business

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	6810
-------------------------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIIONS

Hydro rates

Mr. Bill Walker	6810
-----------------------	------

Newborn health

Mme France Gélinas	6810
--------------------------	------

Lung health

Mrs. Cristina Martins	6810
-----------------------------	------

Health care

Mr. Ted Arnott	6810
----------------------	------

Health care funding

Ms. Peggy Sattler	6811
-------------------------	------

Lung health

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....	6811
-------------------------------	------

Health care funding

Mr. Norm Miller.....	6811
----------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Mme France Gélinas	6811
--------------------------	------

Employment practices

Mr. Lou Rinaldi.....	6812
----------------------	------

Newborn health

Mr. Todd Smith.....	6812
---------------------	------

Privatization of public assets

Ms. Peggy Sattler	6812
-------------------------	------

Water fluoridation

Mr. Bob Delaney	6812
-----------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Budget Measures Act, 2015, Bill 144, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2015 sur les mesures budgétaires, projet de loi 144, M. Sousa

Second reading vote deferred.....	6813
-----------------------------------	------

Police Record Checks Reform Act, 2015, Bill 113,

Mr. Naqvi / Loi de 2015 sur la réforme des vérifications de dossiers de police, projet de loi 113, M. Naqvi	
--	--

Mr. Bas Balkissoon	6813
--------------------------	------

Mr. Norm Miller.....	6814
----------------------	------

Ms. Jennifer K. French	6815
------------------------------	------

Mr. Toby Barrett	6819
------------------------	------

Mr. John Vanthof	6820
------------------------	------

Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	6821
------------------------	------

Mr. Gilles Bisson	6823
-------------------------	------

Third reading vote deferred.....	6825
----------------------------------	------

Strengthening Consumer Protection and Electricity System Oversight Act, 2015, Bill 112, Mr. Chiarelli / Loi de 2015 pour renforcer la protection des consommateurs et la surveillance du réseau d'électricité, projet de loi 112, M. Chiarelli

Mr. John Yakabuski	6825
--------------------------	------

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6828
-------------------------	------

Third reading vote deferred.....	6832
----------------------------------	------

Energy Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, Bill 135, Mr. Chiarelli / Loi de 2015 modifiant des lois sur l'énergie, projet de loi 135, M. Chiarelli

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6832
----------------------------	------

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6834
-------------------------	------

Hon. Ted McMeekin	6834
-------------------------	------

Mr. Bill Walker	6834
-----------------------	------

Ms. Cindy Forster.....	6834
------------------------	------

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6835
Mr. Percy Hatfield	6835
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	6836
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6837
Ms. Cindy Forster	6837
Mr. Bob Delaney	6837
Mr. Percy Hatfield	6838
Mr. Jim McDonell	6838
Ms. Catherine Fife	6839
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	6840
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	6840
Mr. John Vanthof.....	6840
Mr. Jim McDonell	6841
Mr. John Vanthof.....	6841
Mr. Lou Rinaldi	6842
Mr. Jack MacLaren.....	6843
Ms. Cindy Forster	6843
Hon. James J. Bradley	6843
Mr. John Vanthof.....	6843
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	6844
Ms. Catherine Fife	6845
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	6845
Mr. Bill Walker.....	6846
Mr. Percy Hatfield	6846
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	6846
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	6847

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Monday 30 November 2015 / Lundi 30 novembre 2015

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	6793
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	6793
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6793
Hon. Reza Moridi.....	6793
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	6793
Hon. Dipika Damerla	6793
Mr. John Vanthof	6793
Hon. Helena Jaczek.....	6793
Mme France Gélinas	6793
Mrs. Cristina Martins	6793
Ms. Harinder Malhi.....	6793
Mr. Arthur Potts	6793
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6793
ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES	
Ontario economy	
Mr. Patrick Brown.....	6793
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6794
Hon. Charles Sousa	6794
Ontario economy	
Ms. Lisa MacLeod	6794
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6795
Privatization of public assets	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6795
Hon. Charles Sousa	6795
Privatization of public assets	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6796
Hon. Charles Sousa	6796
Privatization of public assets	
Mr. Todd Smith.....	6797
Hon. Charles Sousa	6797
Privatization of public assets	
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	6798
Hon. Charles Sousa	6798
Forest management	
Ms. Daiene Vernile	6798
Hon. Bill Mauro	6798
Winter highway maintenance	
Mr. Michael Harris.....	6799
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	6799
Long-term care	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	6800
Hon. Dipika Damerla	6800
Hydro generation	
Mr. Bas Balkissoon	6800
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	6800
Hospital funding	
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	6801
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6801
Hospital funding	
Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	6801
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6802
First Nations	
Mr. Chris Ballard	6802
Hon. David Zimmer	6802
Family doctors	
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	6803
Hon. Eric Hoskins	6803
Poverty	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6803
Hon. Deborah Matthews	6803
INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS	
Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	6804
Hon. Steven Del Duca.....	6804
MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS	
Highway improvement	
Mr. Ted Arnott	6804
Climate change	
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	6804
Lung health	
Mrs. Kathryn McGarry	6805
Janice Bye	
Mr. Bill Walker	6805
RenewABILITY Energy Inc.	
Ms. Catherine Fife	6805
Shoebox Project	
Ms. Ann Hoggarth.....	6805

Continued on inside back cover