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Wednesday 13 May 2015

Mercredi 13 mai 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 13 May 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 13 mai 2015

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Ms. Damerla moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2015 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2015 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Damerla moves third reading of Bill 45.

Ms. Damerla?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I am pleased to rise today for the third reading of Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, 2015, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2015 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2015 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

As we begin, I would like to thank everyone who appeared before the Standing Committee on General Government, especially the youth, who did a great job. I also want to acknowledge my colleague the member for Kingston and the Islands, with whom I will be splitting my time this morning and whom I would like to thank for diligently shepherding this bill through the committee process. Thank you so much. I would also like to warmly thank all the members of the committee who worked so very hard in closely considering Bill 45.

It would be remiss of me, Mr. Speaker, not to, at this point, acknowledge the leadership shown by the former Minister of Health, Minister Deb Matthews, as well as the leadership shown by yourself, the Speaker, and the MPP France Gélinas, for their work on laying the groundwork for many parts and many elements of this bill.

This comprehensive legislative package, if passed, would protect youth from the dangers of tobacco and the potential harms of electronic cigarettes, also known as e-cigarettes. Also included in the proposed legislation are measures to help families make healthier choices by giving them caloric information when eating out or purchasing take-away meals. The Making Healthier Choices Act, if passed, will play an important role in empowering Ontarians to make the decisions that help them lead healthier lives and move us even closer to a truly smoke-free Ontario.

The fact is that we've done very well here in Ontario. Between 2000 and 2013, Ontario's smoking rate dropped from 24.5% to 18.1%, which equals approximately 332,000 fewer smokers in Ontario. Since 2005, Ontario has become an international leader in tobacco control because of our Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Our government has taken a strong stand in protecting people from second-hand smoke in enclosed public places and enclosed workplaces.

But the fact is that there is more to do; the fact is that even today too many people die tobacco-related deaths.

Since 2005, Ontario has become an international leader in tobacco control because of our Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Further amendments to the act included protecting children from exposure to second-hand smoke in motor vehicles, as of 2009, and prohibiting the sale of flavoured cigarillos, as of 2010.

On January 1 of this year, new regulations came into effect that:

—make it more difficult for young people to purchase tobacco by prohibiting tobacco sales on post-secondary education campuses;

—prohibit smoking on all bar and restaurant outdoor patios, with an exemption for uncovered patios that were established by a branch of the Royal Canadian Legion prior to November 18, 2013; and

—prohibit smoking on playgrounds, publicly owned sporting areas, spectator areas adjacent to sporting areas and the 20 metres surrounding these areas.

Our government continues to take active steps to protect young people from the health risks and impacts of smoking.

This act has three schedules, the first of which, if passed, would ban all flavoured tobacco. The reason we are doing this is very clear. If we are to truly push down smoking rates in Ontario, we have to do two things: First, we have to help those who want to quit, quit; secondly, we have to do everything we can to ensure that that next generation of smokers does not start smoking.

The evidence is clear that the tobacco industry adds flavours to tobacco to attract new smokers, particularly youth. It is in this context that we have moved forward to ban all flavoured tobacco, including menthol. We believe that this legislation, if passed, will truly move us that much closer to a smoke-free Ontario.

But there is a new player in town, and I vividly remember the first time I came across it. I was on the GO train with my daughter when I thought I saw somebody smoking on the GO train. I was shocked, because it's not something we usually see. We don't see somebody smoking in enclosed spaces anymore.

I recall telling my daughter, "Look at that. Somebody is flouting whatever rule it is. How is it that this person is so blatantly smoking inside the car of a GO train?" My daughter, of course, is a teenager who knows a lot more about these things, turned to me and said, "Mom, that's not a cigarette; it's an electronic cigarette."

I recall that moment particularly for what it was, because it was so jarring for me to see what looked like somebody smoking inside the GO train. I think it speaks to the fact that an entire generation of Ontarians has never seen anybody smoke inside a subway, inside a movie theatre, inside the workplace or inside a GO train. It speaks to the success of our anti-smoking legislation and the hard-fought gains—really hard-fought gains—that we must continue to protect.

The fact is that electronic cigarettes are both an opportunity and a risk. This is new technology that, quite frankly, might have the potential for harm reduction. But at the same time, we also recognize that in the absence of longitudinal studies, in the absence of longitudinal evidence, we still don't know what all the risks of this new technology might be. So we've tried to negotiate a careful path between recognizing the potential for harm reduction that electronic cigarettes bring and, at the same time, recognizing that there could be risks and harms associated with this new technology that we are not fully aware of. That is why we are moving to regulate electronic cigarettes.

0910

If the Electronic Cigarettes Act is passed, it would call for:

—a ban the sale and supply of e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 19;

—a prohibition on the use of e-cigarettes in certain places, such as enclosed work spaces and enclosed public places;

—a ban on the sale of e-cigarettes in certain places such as vending machines or grocery stores that contain pharmacies;

—a prohibition on the display and promotion of e-cigarettes in places where e-cigarettes or tobacco products are sold or offered for sale.

We have listened to the concerns expressed by stakeholders, including specialty e-cigarette retailers, and any exemptions will be considered during the regulation-making process.

These changes would ban the sale of e-cigarettes to minors, making it harder for youth to obtain e-cigarettes. It would also make tobacco products less tempting by banning the sale of flavored tobacco, which I already spoke to.

In addition to banning menthol and regulating electronic cigarettes, this act would also, if passed, make it mandatory for any restaurant or food service premise in Ontario with over 20 locations to post calories on their menus and menu boards. More specifically, if passed, the act would require calories for standard food and beverage items, including alcohol, to be posted on menus and menu boards in restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores and other food service premises with 20 or more locations in Ontario. It would require food service premises to post contextual information that would help to educate patrons about their daily caloric requirements and authorize inspectors to enforce menu-labelling requirements.

Currently, over 60% of large chain restaurants already provide nutritional information voluntarily upon demand, on websites or in-store. The proposed menu-labelling legislation is also a key component of our Healthy Kids Strategy, which responds to the Healthy Kids Panel's recommendations for reducing childhood obesity.

We have heard from many partners and individuals regarding the importance of what we're proposing, and should this legislation pass we will continue these discussions in the form of consultations with key stakeholders to ensure successful implementation.

It is interesting that the proposed menu-labelling legislation has widespread support in Ontario, and I'm one of those who supports this legislation. I'm going to share a story: Back in 2011 when I first ran for office, I remember somebody saying to me, just in passing, "You're going to campaign, and you're going to lose some weight." I said, "That's good. Win or lose, at least I'll lose some weight." I recall very clearly that at the end of the campaign I had actually gained weight. I was a little surprised, but I didn't think much of it; there was just too much to do as a brand new MPP. As it happened, the penny dropped for me—

Interjections.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: That's why we're going to go ahead with this legislation and you're going to support us.

As I was saying, the penny dropped one day when, quite accidentally and inadvertently, I was browsing the website of Tim Hortons and found out that a medium Iced Capp can pack as much as 600 or 700 calories. That's when the penny dropped for me. All of you who may remember the 2014 election will recall that it was a summer election, a very hot election. I remember that at the end of every canvass I would treat my volunteers to a cold drink. Usually we'd go to Tim's, and people would have a coffee and I would usually get myself an Iced Capp. The trouble was that I would canvass about three times a day. So while my volunteers might be drinking one Iced Capp, there were days I was drinking three Iced

Capps a day, packing in 1,800 calories. Meanwhile, it appears that the maximum calories for an adult woman is somewhere in the 1,500 to 1,800 range, and here I was, taking in 1,500 calories just through my Iced Capps. Then, of course, add the doughnuts and samosas and all the stuff that goes with a campaign, and no wonder I gained some weight. The point I'm making is: When I walked into the Tim Hortons, had I been able to see, next to the Iced Capp, 600 calories—might I only have bought myself one a day instead of three a day? I think that is the power of this legislation. It really is about empowering Ontarians; helping them make the decisions they need to make. I, personally, am truly looking forward to this legislation as well.

In all, the goal, the leitmotif, of all these three pieces of legislation is quite simple: It is about making Ontario the best place in North America—the healthiest place in North America—to grow up and grow old.

We have consulted extensively, in making this legislation, but I also want to say to the House that the consultation process doesn't stop with the passing of the bill. Should this bill pass and we go to regulation-making, I have committed to once again consult broadly with our stakeholders because, as we all know, it is at the regulation stage of a bill that the rubber actually hits the road. So I have committed—and we have committed—to talking to all of our stakeholders to make sure that we get this bill right, with just one goal; that is, to make Ontario the lowest-smoking jurisdiction and to make Ontario the healthiest place in North America to grow up and grow old.

I hope that all of you will find the bill worthy of support.

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

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I am really proud today to be here and to support this critical piece of legislation. As Minister Damerla has so clearly laid out, passage of the legislation under debate today would ban the sale of e-cigarettes to minors, making it harder for youth to obtain e-cigarettes.

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

It would also require large, chain food-service premises like fast-food restaurants to post calories on menus, providing key support to helping Ontarians make well-informed choices about what they eat and what they feed their children when dining out. I'd say it's hard to argue with that.

If passed, schedule 1 of the Making Healthier Choices Act will take effect on January 1, 2017. Following the passage, key stakeholders will be consulted on the development of regulations to support the legislation, including:

—calorie posting, in order to determine the size, format and prominence of calorie information to be posted on menus, and how calorie information will be determined;

—standard food items, in order to provide further clarity and/or set out requirements for standard food items captured by the legislation;

—contextual statement, in order to determine the size, format and content of the contextual statement, such as that the average adult requires 2,000 calories a day;

—exemptions, in order to determine if any of the exemptions from the calorie posting requirements are needed, such as seasonal items on the menu for a limited number of days.

Let me now speak to the ban on the sale of flavored tobacco. In the 2014 budget, our government committed to prohibiting the sale of tobacco products that contain flavours and additives that appeal to youth. These products are often packaged in brightly coloured wrappers and smell strongly of candy and fruit flavours—precisely what appeals to youth.

Additional evidence emerged indicating that young people in significant numbers are using menthol-flavoured tobacco products. During committee hearings, we heard from a representative of the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division, which has been advocating for a ban on youth-friendly flavoured tobacco for a long time. According to the society, flavoured tobacco products are no longer so-called niche products. Instead, they are widely used by the majority of youth who use tobacco products. In Ontario, more than 57,000 youth in grades 6 to 12 have reported using a flavoured tobacco product in the last 30 days. Almost 19,000 Ontario youth, or one in four who reported smoking, say that they are smoking menthol cigarettes. I started with a menthol cigarette.

0920

The society believes that the inclusion of menthol in Bill 45 is both progressive and necessary. Dr. David McKeown, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health, cited a recent University of Waterloo research study which found that more than half of youth tobacco users in grades 9 to 12 used flavoured tobacco products; a quarter of youth smokers smoked menthol cigarettes. This demonstrates youth's preference for flavours and the strong appeal of menthol cigarettes in particular.

We have a responsibility to act on flavoured tobacco, and we are going to do that by banning all flavours, be it bubble gum or mint. I want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, and the members of this House that key stakeholders will be consulted on the following proposed amendments to Ontario regulation 48/06 through the Ontario regulatory registry. With respect to flavoured tobacco, we will consult on how to define the term "flavouring agent" for the purposes of describing what types of flavoured tobacco are prohibited for sale and what exemptions might apply, such as flavoured tobacco products primarily used by adults, that is, those that contain additives but still predominantly taste like tobacco and no other flavour.

In December 2013, consultations were conducted through the Ontario registry on the following proposed amendments:

Hospital grounds: Prohibit smoking on outdoor grounds of hospitals; and

Provincial government properties: Prohibit smoking on the grounds of specified provincial government properties and prohibit the sale of tobacco on specified provincial government properties.

The government is planning to move forward with these proposed initiatives. They will help to ensure that the gains made under the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy are maintained.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Twenty people in the room and 19 conversations.

Go ahead.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With this strong action, we are working to prevent the next generation of Ontarians from becoming addicted to tobacco. Banning the sale of flavoured tobacco products will help us to achieve our goal of having the lowest smoking rate in Canada.

The dangers of smoking and tobacco use are well known and documented. However, the risks that come with the use of e-cigarettes may be less familiar to some of you. During the committee hearings on the bill, presentations were made that pointed to the possible risks associated with e-cigarettes. Further, a study from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, published in Nicotine and Tobacco Research in August 2014, found that in a nationally representative sample of middle- and high-school students who had never smoked cigarettes, youth who had used e-cigarettes were nearly two times more likely to have intentions to smoke conventional cigarettes than youth who had never used e-cigarettes.

I want to make it clear that it is not our government's intention to remove e-cigarettes from the Ontario marketplace at this time. The proposed approach focuses on taking action to protect Ontario's children and youth from accessing and using a product that may pose potential harm to their health.

I believe all members will agree that this proposed legislation is a measured and precautionary response to a new and emerging product that may have harmful effects.

If the legislation is passed, our government intends to consult with key stakeholders on the development of regulations to support the legislation. The consultations will focus on two parts. During the first part, the ministry will consult to facilitate the implementation of age-based sales restrictions, which are proposed to come into effect on January 1, 2016. The subject of these consultations will include a number of areas.

Through the regulatory registry, the ministry will consult around signage in order to clarify that all signs required by the act and the regulations must be posted in a clearly visible area.

The ministry will also consult on the types of identification that would be acceptable as proof of age to ensure that persons who have access to e-cigarettes are at least 19 years of age.

We will be asking for opinions about details regarding the signage to be posted at all retail outlets selling electronic cigarettes. The signage would indicate that electronic cigarette sales are restricted to those 19 years of age and older.

Finally, through the regulatory registry, we will discuss the details regarding the signage that is to be posted at all retail outlets selling electronic cigarettes. The signage would indicate that ID is requested for anyone who appears to be under the age of 25.

The second phase will focus on the implementation of the other provisions of the bill, which are proposed to come into effect January 1, 2017. These provisions include display and promotion, and use and sales restrictions in certain places.

In order to facilitate implementation, the ministry will consult on: details regarding required signage showing e-cigarettes are prohibited for use in specified places; details regarding additional areas where the use of e-cigarettes is prohibited; and details on the display and promotion ban.

The ministry will also consult on procedures for employees who complain of being retaliated against by an employer. We will also look at procedures for home health care workers who leave a client's home, which will mirror the procedure in the regulation made under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act; and finally, procedures for seizing funds in vending machines in the form of credit card and debit transactions.

The measures we are proposing under this legislation are part of our commitment under Patients First, Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care, to provide Ontarians with the information they need to play an active role in their own health. The importance of this legislation cannot be underestimated. Responsible government does not, and will not, leave its citizens' best possible health to chance.

One of the reasons why this legislation is so important to me personally is because my brother is a former smoker. He has dreadful asthma, and he has been taking prednisone for many, many years, which has deteriorated his bone health. He's only two years older than me and has had hip-replacement surgery.

I cannot underestimate the importance of this legislation, and I truly hope that we have the support of this House on this very important bill.

I'm proud to say that our government is taking action to help our young people stay healthy and get the best possible start in life. There is nothing quite like observing a loved one who has difficulty breathing—every breath is an effort.

I urge all members to support our proposed legislation.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to stand here in the Legislature and address Bill 45 at third reading. I was privileged in second reading to address this particular bill. We, in the Progressive Conservatives, will, in fact, be supporting this bill.

There are three key elements of this bill that I do want to talk very briefly about, since my time is limited. One is, first of all, of course, the banning of marketing of tobacco products to children. We all know the impact—that once they catch children at a young age and they start smoking, the addiction aspect of that. And, of course, it leads to other things, not just smoking cigarettes or pipes or cigars, but it also leads to perhaps illegal drugs as well. There are statistics to prove that.

The other thing is that we want to crack down on illegal smoke shacks, where people can, in fact, purchase these cigarettes at a very cheap price.

The other thing that is of interest to me is not only just the childhood obesity—because we look at it, and we're saying, "Well, what are we doing in our school systems these days to encourage more physical activity?" In the younger grades, the elementary grades, they're fairly busy. Then they get into high school, and my concern there is that they only have to take one credit for phys. ed. in their four years of high school. Of course, to me, that just adds, again, to the need for them to get on a weight-control program, because they're not as physically active.

0930

The other thing, in the few moments that I have left, is to talk about the calorie count. I find that calorie count—I count calories, and I keep a close eye on it. Since January 1, I have dropped over 40 pounds by keeping a close eye on things. Again, I think that that's really, really important, that people start to take count of their calories to enhance their lifestyles.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The NDP supports Bill 45 to help protect the health of families and young people. We know that calorie labelling in chain restaurants will help families make informed decisions. We know that tougher restrictions on smoking, including a ban on flavored tobacco products, will help discourage young people from smoking.

That being said, the Liberals voted against key amendments that would have served to make this bill much stronger. The NDP moved 17 amendments in committee and the Liberals voted against 16 of those changes, such as immediately banning menthol tobacco products. We've already heard that the use of menthol increases smoking amongst young people. It would have made sense for the Liberals to support us on that amendment.

Mandating sodium labelling on menus: Again, this only makes sense considering the bill mandates calorie labelling. Many of the presenters at committee spoke about the need for sodium labelling, which the Liberals have clearly ignored.

We moved an amendment allowing municipalities to require additional nutrition information so long as they include the labelling required by provincial law. Many municipalities have been ground-breakers when it comes to protecting public health, when it comes to dealing with issues like smoking and healthy food. It would make sense to continue to allow them to have the power to go beyond provincial statute.

We put forward an amendment the Liberals didn't support mandating the minister to establish a committee to review whether sodium information should be displayed.

We support this bill, but it could have been much stronger if the Liberals had supported the NDP amendments.

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

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to be able to stand and speak in favour of Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act, for its third reading. I just wanted to focus on the menu labelling for a second. It goes without saying that we all want to make sure that our children eat healthy. We understand what that means later down the road for them. If we teach them to eat healthy now, when they're adults they will eat healthy. And for ourselves as well, we need to eat healthy.

I know from many years of consumer advocacy that it really boils down to: Do consumers have the information they need to make informed choices? All too often, when we go into restaurants, we don't have the information we need to make informed choices. We've all heard the stories about buying a healthy bran muffin over the chocolate doughnut, only to find out years later with some horror that that doughnut had less fat in it, had less sugar in it, than the healthy bran muffin—alleged healthy bran muffin.

I know from my work on processed food labelling that's going through the federal process right now—I was shocked to learn from food scientists and merchandisers that we have what the food scientists would call the taste triumvirate: fat, sugar and salt. What shocked me, working with consumer advocates, is that all too often, when a product that we see on the shelf with the label "low salt"—it in fact has lower salt than the regular brand, but what they do when they drop one of those—salt, fat or sugar—is to boost up the other. So "low fat" might mean an increase in sugar or salt; "low salt" usually means an increase in fat. It's very confusing for consumers when they think they're buying healthy and in fact they're not.

I think Bill 45 goes a long way to making sure that we can take care of our children and we as consumers can make an informed choice.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I, too, am pleased to join the debate on Bill 45. I think it is important that people make informed choices, but if you really want to, you can inform yourself. Some of the stuff in Bill 45, I think, will be nice to see, but no one is ever going to go into McDonald's and actually say, "Before I eat that Big Mac that I love so much, I'm going to check all of the nutritional stuff on it." They've already done their research; they know. If they really care about what's going into their bodies, they've already done that research.

I'll tell you, one of the biggest threats we have in our society is obesity and what we're seeing with our children, and that is because healthy choices are not being made. The parents have to spend more time thinking about how much time their children are spending in front of a TV screen or a computer and how much time they're spending doing physical activities that burn calories. As this becomes more prevalent, the strain on our health care system is going to become more and more evident. It's a big strain on our health care system already—illnesses associated with obesity—and we need to do a whole lot better than we're doing today or we're going to have a real tsunami of disastrous and catastrophic health care issues as we head into the future.

This is a start, but just putting numbers on a menu is not the issue. There has to be some real education for people that they understand. It's a question most times of input and output. We live in a sedentary society today. Very few people do hard, physical work anymore, so we have to find ways of burning off those calories.

We live in a high-stress world, as well, which is a challenge. We have to find ways of burning off those calories in a healthy way and consuming less of them. Look at the portions that are served today versus 20 years ago. They are much larger. We have to change the way we live.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has two minutes.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I want to thank the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, the member for Toronto–Danforth and the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for taking the time to respond to this bill.

Before that, I'd also like to take some time to thank and welcome many stakeholders who have been with us every step of the way for Bill 45. They are in the members' gallery here: Kalaisan Kalaichelvan and Nicole McInerney; Chris Yaccato, Lindsey Quarrie, Monica Sarkar, Kaitlyn Wallace, Kristy Ste Marie and Gemma Styling from the Ontario Lung Association; and from the Heart and Stroke Foundation we have Cristin Napier, Krista Orendorff, Nadia Formigoni and Brian Kellow.

In the time that I have left, I just want to thank all three members who, for the most part, spoke out in support of this bill. What's there to not support? That's how I would look at it.

To address the member from Toronto–Danforth, I believe this is a robust bill. This is a bill that we have widely consulted on, and I believe we have landed in the right place.

I take the points by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke as well around the fact that, yes, we agree that this is just one tool in our tool box of fighting obesity. The posting of calories is not the only solution; he's right. We need to look at other things, including living more actively, and those are initiatives that this government is actually moving forward on.

But largely today I just want to say that this has been a long journey. I want to thank everybody who has been there to support us, and I truly look forward to the passage of this bill.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I believe we have unanimous consent to stand down our lead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry seeks unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I am happy to rise and speak to third reading of Bill 45. It's a bill that I spoke to at second reading and that I also sat in on for a number of hours on amendments. Typical, I guess, of all the bills I've sat in on for amendments, essentially all the amendments were voted down by this government. It's a practice I've seen since I got here, where it doesn't matter what the amendments are. They talk about sending bills off for reasonable and needed changes, but when we get there, there's certainly no consideration given to really improving the bills.

0940

We do support this bill. We did want to see some changes. There's a lot of good in it and there are a lot of things that we need in our system. The calories on menus is one part. I think a lot of us, especially a lot of people here, struggle with their weight. It was funny to hear the story about electioneering, when you're on the road and you're always typically jumping in to grab something, fast food, and sometimes some of this food will surprise you.

I remember working as a fundraiser at Tim Hortons and being involved with the makeup of some of their foods and seeing just how much cream is actually used in some of their drinks. I remember the Iced Capp is essentially a glass full of 19% cream, so it's got a lot of calories in it. I was somewhat surprised. Certainly you can ask for it to be made with milk, which you can imagine takes down the calorie level an extreme amount. I don't know what the calorie rating would be, although I know they provide it, but it's just an indication of how you're taking something—and really, I don't find a big difference in taste between the standard one that you'd get if you normally ask for an Iced Capp or one made with milk. But you can see the numbers are significant and something that this calorie information would certainly be a big help with.

In the same light, I remember before coming up here my wife, Margie, and I went on a bike trip from Niagara Falls to the Quebec border. It's something they do every year, and it's something I got to know because they used to end up in our township at the Quebec border. We used to have a little bit of a party for them to celebrate the accomplishment. As we started out, I one year tried to make it from Cornwall to the border and had quite a bit of trouble but finally made it. They were looking for somebody to do the whole track. They wanted a municipal politician, so I ended up doing it the next year. There was a lady who was on that trip, and you know

how you hear people talking. She was talking about getting on the trip to lose weight. At the end, she said she was upset because she hadn't lost any weight. She said, "You know, those energy bars." Everywhere you stopped, there were energy bars. Of course you're exercising and you think, well, you need the energy. But when you look at the calories on those energy bars, they add up. In fact, I think she said she put on 10 pounds. So it's just something that can happen. Intentions are well worth it sometimes, but in the end what comes out of it is quite different.

So when I went on the trip a year later, I'd go up and every place you stop—probably 10 times a day—for a water break, there would be a pile of those energy bars on the table. I'd go to grab one, and I'd think, "Well, really, I don't think I really need those," and I'd grab one of the bananas or oranges they had out.

So calories on menus are really an important part of this legislation. We tried, through the amendments, to put some things in order. We thought we were right. One of the amendments—I think it came from the NDP—was all about where you have foods that are similar. I'm thinking of a Dairy Queen, where you go in and they have a sundae and there are 35 flavours: strawberry, raspberry, the normal flavours you see. Then they have a milkshake, and it's the same, and then they have a Blizzard. The amendment would allow, where foods are similar or flavours and calories are similar, that they would be able to put up an average when it was within 15%. Of course this government turned that down.

There was no consideration for the logistics. You can imagine now going through a menu lineup where you might have 400 or 500 items because you have to break down every group that has 35 or so flavours. Really, what's the point? What are we trying to do? We're trying to give people an indication of what reasonably is available in calories when you're buying a food. Whether something is 100 or 105 calories—what you really want to know is, is it 100 or is it 1,000, or is it 200 or 300?

This amendment was turned down—as almost all the amendments were, because they came from the other side. Fast foods are generally set up as drive-throughs, or you run through. How are people realistically going to interpret the information? So, in some ways, you've made this bill probably useless when it comes to certain franchisees, because it's just not practical to do. It's unfortunate and, again, an example of amendments not in place.

I go back to one in the previous session, where you talk about the logic of our amendments and the refusal, I think, to accept them. We had a communication bill where we were talking about the day a contract ran out, the contract was cancelled. The phone number was taken away. We put in an amendment. I use a cellphone, like many people. Everybody here essentially does, except for the member opposite with his white book. But you can imagine. I have friends who have had phones for many years, and the contract's up, but they keep on going. If you're going to lose your number and the phone is being deactivated—it really didn't make any sense.

When we went through amendments, the government talked against that. It didn't make sense. They moved ahead with it. Of course, we went through the days of the McGuinty prorogation in the House, so the bill died on the floor. The bill was resurrected in a new form and, lo and behold, that change was incorporated. To me, that just indicated that the government would not accept—they talk about sending things for amendment, they talk about trying to improve things, but really there's no intention. So you wonder why we spend the hours and hours if they really are not interested, even when, I think, in a case like that, they believed it was a good amendment—but they refused to allow it to be used.

So the calories and the food side—it's a good initiative. Certainly, we're battling with an issue, especially with our youth. But we have to put through meaningful legislation. I look back at one of the previous legislations put in place around healthy foods in cafeterias. Sometimes you have to look beyond the legislation. It's all well-meaning; it's all good news. But when you look through what's happening in our high schools now, children are just leaving the high schools to eat lunch across the road at the local fast-food place, because the food that's now on the menus is no longer something that they'll eat. It's fine to have healthy food around, but you have to have it in a format that people enjoy.

I know in our local high school, if there's some type of trip, they actually close down the cafeteria because they don't have enough people going to the cafeteria to make it worthwhile. A school has 300 or 400 children in it, but you can imagine that there are so many people who travel off the property down to a local spot to eat that that means there's no place to eat. There's the legislation put in place, but it means that actually there's nothing.

I think that there's an important message like that. You have to look at what you're doing with the legislation and what the impact will be. I'm sure that in a lot of cases, it's an unintended consequence, but it would be worthwhile to review and follow up, and say, "Well, there's something that's not working; let's fix that." I think that there's what you call a missed opportunity.

One of the amendments we tried—we received information from some of the franchise establishments, where the legislation really blamed not only the franchisee but the franchiser. I think the legislation was really about trying to ensure that the person who was operating, the owner of the premises, was responsible under the legislation. We tried a number of times to clarify that and to make sure that the legislation—you've got an A&W or you've got a Dairy Queen. We have many of those franchises. If the local operator is doing something that's not standard, how do you go back and charge the person that owns the name? That's what we're talking about. We think that it really should fall down to the operator, and we thought it just made sense.

When I talk now, moving over to the tobacco side—I come from a family of smokers. My mother and father both smoked, and, I'd say, more than half of my brothers

and sisters. We had a fairly large family. So I saw the effects of cigarettes.

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I also saw how hard it was—I don't think there was anybody who didn't try to quit smoking. I look back now—after many years, I've had a number of brothers and sisters who have quit—and I remember my dad often trying to quit smoking. At the time, it was probably more of a money issue back in the 1960s, when we were growing up. There wasn't a lot of money in the farm, and cigarettes were something that I think he looked at and knew that it just wasn't worth the money. He would constantly try to quit, but it was just something he couldn't do.

I think you have to somewhat appreciate a generation of people who grew up when there was nothing really wrong with cigarettes. They were promoted; they were a great tax revenue for the government. Really, it only came up in the 1970s and the 1980s, when people started to realize there were other issues. So I feel sometimes that we're beating these people up.

I go by the local hospital, and I see we're outlawing these cigarettes on provincial properties. I think, again, you have to look at what you're doing. You see patients now, sitting on the sidewalk, smoking. These are people, I'm sure, who would love to quit smoking. There's generally a grass area that's a few hundred feet. What are we accomplishing? What are we trying to do here? Can we not force them outside the building, and allow them to smoke with some privacy, away from people? I guess they're a group that can be beat up, and I think that's just why we're doing it.

On the alternative side, we go by schools and we allow our children, who are under 19, to actually smoke in public. We give them the place; we give them a nice little area where nobody can bother them. Teachers and principals can't watch who is there. I've talked to principals who say they know very well that that's the centre where students are buying contraband and where they're buying other drugs, and there's an unintended consequence that could easily be changed. If we're really trying so hard to stop smoking, let's just make it illegal for children under 19 to smoke. We do it with alcohol, and we're quite successful. All we've done now is we've given the cool place to be, and in a lot of cases, we've actually increased smoking at that level, because we've given them a place to go.

Further with this idea of the nanny state, you can't smoke in parks now. So you get parents—I don't smoke, myself, but I know people who smoke, and they would love to quit. So here is an opportunity for them to take their children out to a park, but now they can't smoke in the park. I guess you can close your eyes, but all that really means is there will be less opportunities for the children to get out. It was something that served people; you got fresh air for the children. The idea is novel, but you've got to look at—we've got a nanny state here that's really watching over everybody's shoulder. Just what are you trying to do?

On the other hand, you've got the contraband problem that really is a more serious issue. In our area, they've done some testing: The vast majority of cigarettes that our young people are smoking are contraband, yet there's nothing being done here. If you really wanted to take some action, go after these illegal cigarettes. Get rid of the location where you're allowing the contraband dealers to come in and sell their wares. Take some action.

We're looking at more than a billion dollars of lost revenue a year, due to contraband. We've got legislation here that, in many ways, will only increase the amount of contraband that's being sold in this province.

Menthol is a good example. A majority of people in this province smoke menthol cigarettes. Studies have shown that if we just eliminate that—and they're not doing it on day one; they're going to allow that to be done through regulation, so we really don't know what that means, because we don't see regulation. It just happens under the government. They've said that they'll seek the menthol from contraband sources. Stats show that there are more varieties of menthol in contraband than there are in the regular types of cigarettes that you can buy legally. So there's an example where the market bears out what people know: The ban on menthol will only lead to problems.

Some $1.1 billion is lost to contraband. You wonder what that would do. It would hire 18,000 nurses in a year. It would pay for almost 24,000 long-term-care beds or provide home care to almost 72,000 patients.

This is a time when we could use this money. We have people in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry who can't find long-term-care beds. We're sending them outside the region, yet this government tries to tell people—for those who will believe them—that we have more beds than we need. And yet, every day we're trying to help people out, sending them more than an hour away from their home to find a place where they could actually be given long-term-bed service.

We'd like to allow the menthol a little bit of time, and just really wonder about the benefits of that when so many people smoke. Again, these people are smoking legally. We know that all we're going to do is drive them to an area where we don't want them to go.

I think it's time that we start working and looking at the unintended consequences. We've seen time and time again a government that puts through regulation, walks away and doesn't look in the rear-view mirror to see just what they've done. Smoking numbers have gone to lower levels, but now they've started to bounce back up, and they're bouncing back up with our youth, so what we're doing is not working. We can make it tougher to buy them legally, but they're not buying them legally in the first place. Why we think that's going to make a difference, I'm not sure, because these are an illegal product to be sold to children under 19.

When you look at the stats—they can easily pick up the butts; they know whether they're legal cigarettes or contraband—in my area it's something over 70% of the cigarettes are actually contraband. You can do all you

want, but if you're not attacking the source, you're not really going to have any issues.

E-cigarettes are also something that concern us. This is a product that, for people who are trying to reduce their smoking, has been proven successful. Studies or science so far show that there are no negative effects from e-cigarettes. I think all we're doing is taking away a tool from the people who are really trying to stop; it's a nasty habit. I think it's time we really work with them and give them the options.

I have a letter from a consumer: "As a consumer of menthol cigarettes, I'm urging you to reverse the government's decision to ban menthol in Ontario. We've been purchasing these products for many years and don't understand the reason to ban them now. I don't expect the ban to change my smoking habits, and I'm sure people will simply find these products elsewhere. I agree that young people should not be smoking, but banning menthol will not help achieve this goal." This is a menthol issue.

"Hello, sir. I've recently established a retail outlet selling PV products in Cornwall. I would like to address the proposed Bill 45 regarding e-cigarettes and the effects on the industry, human health and our facility. Our studies and many others worldwide show that electronic cigarettes are the most effective stop-smoking aid available. Treating e-cigarettes as tobacco is dangerous to the industry and people's health and freedoms, and just plain scientifically inaccurate. I would like to request a short discussion."

These are people who have come forth and talked about e-cigarettes. I have another one here questioning the logic of this government; I know sometimes it's hard to figure out the logic. But I think we have a great tool here with e-cigarettes.

I think the words of the minister were that we know there's no science to suggest they are dangerous, but we're going to ban them and then we'll review in the future. That's the first time I've heard that logic used, but I think it's very telling of this government that doesn't like to use the science. It has hurt us in many areas, including the energy sector. I think it's time to review the science and look at what's really good for the province.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure to contribute to the debate today on Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act.

I just want to mention a few facts. The average Canadian visited restaurants 184 times in 2007. On average, Canadians prepare and eat at home only two of every three meals. Many restaurant foods contain high levels of calories and sodium. There's also a wide variation among similar dishes at different restaurants.

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The other piece here is another interesting fact: 35% of the sugar that Canadians consume comes from added sugars, such as soft drinks and candy, as opposed to naturally occurring sugars in fruits, vegetables and milk. For kids, almost half of their daily sugar intake, which is 44%, is now coming from beverages, and soft drinks are the primary source of sugar in beverages for children aged nine to 18.

The other important thing to know is that income inequality is growing in Ontario, making it harder for families to afford healthy food. Eating healthy food is expensive for Ontario families and not always available. It is often more convenient and more affordable for families to eat fast food or high-calorie processed food, which is readily available in any corner store and in vending machines.

Speaker, the facts speak for themselves. People are accessing takeout foods, eating prepackaged foods, going to restaurants much more frequently. There is a need for this bill, and I think it's important that we recognize that. I'm glad to see that it is coming to the Legislature for third reading. It's a shame that our critic France Gélinas's 17 amendments—16 of those were voted down. I know France is very passionate about this bill, and she made some really good suggestions.

Despite that, I'm glad to see it's here and going to be passed.

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: As a former educator, I think this bill is very important for young people. Evidence shows that children are more obese than they ever were and that their lifespan is not going to be as long as this generation's, and that is because of their eating habits mainly and their sedentary activity.

We know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults, and a healthy start is better for our kids. It's better for our health care system as well. That's why Bill 45 would make it easier for families to make healthy and informed choices by making Ontario the first province to require chain restaurants to post calories. More and more, people with their busy lifestyles tend to turn to going to restaurants or takeout food for their evening meals, and quite often lunch as well.

We are proposing that only calories be posted on the menus as this more closely aligns with a commitment under the Healthy Kids Strategy to reduce obesity in children, since calorie consumption is a major determinant of weight.

No other jurisdiction has ever required that sodium be displayed on menus. While other jurisdictions provide strong evidence that calorie postings alter consumers' behaviour, there is no such evidence for posting sodium. Providing too much information on the menu can be counterproductive, as research has shown, and it can be confusing to the consumer.

I believe that Bill 45 is the right way for us to go and will keep our future generations healthier.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I, too, am pleased to add my voice to Bill 45.

Look, I think it's a bill that heads in the right direction, but I really look forward to the opportunity to be able to discuss some of those things that our member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry spoke about, including menthol cigarettes and contraband tobacco—especially the contraband tobacco side of what will and, sadly, will likely continue to happen.

To me, this is all about choices. It's all about choices in your life. I grew up in an Italian community. We'd get home from school, go to my grandmother's house at 4:30 every day until my folks came home, and we had something called "friselle." I'm sorry, Hansard; I won't know how to spell "friselle." It's week-old bread that's hard as a rock, that you run under water and cover with oil, oregano, tons of salt and pepper. That's what we were given as snacks every night until we had dinner. That's how we grew up. Of course, it's how I got to 220 pounds as a young kid.

Before I ran for mayor of the city of North Bay, I was indeed 220 pounds. I began to visit my naturopath, and I want you to know that today, at 167 pounds, I feel healthy. Most here have never seen me at anything but 167 pounds.

It's all about the choices that we make. Nobody regulated me into doing it. I knew intuitively, I knew instinctively that going to a hamburger place and having a big hamburger was not a good thing for me. I knew that doing it twice a day was a really bad thing, or doing it even twice a week was a bad thing. I didn't need to be regulated, Speaker. I just needed to have that rude awakening that your own health is so important, and to live in moderation.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to stand up once again to speak to Bill 45, the Making Healthier Choices Act. I've been in the House a couple of times during debate through the different readings.

To the member from Nipissing's point about having a choice and not being regulated: The important thing is that when you're making choices, you're making informed choices. One of the amendments that the New Democrats would like to see to the bill was to add sodium labelling, so that when somebody walks into a restaurant they can actually make an informed choice about what they're eating.

I found it interesting that during debate it was the member from Scarborough Southwest—so, from the government side—and then again I believe it was the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, from the government side, who both stood up during debate and acknowledged the importance of sodium labelling. I believe it was the member from Mississauga–Streetsville who said, "Well, just not now. It's important, but just not now."

Mr. Bob Delaney: Right now. Right now.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is important right now. Yet, when it came up from the New Democrats—and many people who came to present to the committee said, "It's important, it should be now"—the government side said, "No, it's not important. We're not going to accept the amendment." Once again, they say they're open to listening, yet many people came forward and said it's important to include sodium labelling, and that was shot down. It's not included.

The member from Barrie spoke about being a former educator and how important it is to educate people. I think that a good step forward is regulating the e-cigarettes so that we're not seeing kids getting into using them and then moving on to tobacco products, but also making sure things are properly labelled so people are educated and they can make informed choices. Often people go into a restaurant and they think they're making a healthy choice, only to find out that something was actually full of sugar or full of sodium. I think the sodium labelling is incredibly important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry has two minutes.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Barrie, Nipissing and Windsor West.

The member from London–Fanshawe was talking about sugar versus natural sugar. I remember when I was helping out at Tim Hortons for a fundraiser, people came in and asked for triple-triple coffee. There's about three-quarters cream and sugar in a triple-triple. I was somewhat surprised. Many of the truck drivers—anyway, it's just surprising when you look at the amount of cream; I think it's 19% cream, so it's strong stuff.

The member from Barrie talked about using the science. I would encourage the government to use the science, because it's too often that we find they haven't, and the consequences are severe, like the Green Energy Act.

We talk about too much information. I just think of some of these fast-food places, what they've required as far as calories for the different flavours. You can imagine. I gave the Dairy Queen example. All these companies have many different flavours, and they have to list every one with the number of calories, according to this legislation. They refuse to amend that. I think there's an example of—just what's realistic? I don't think that is realistic. It will make the billboard so complicated that either they'll have to cut back on what they offer or people won't understand it. I think it's as simple as that.

The member from Nipissing was talking about the new, slim Vic. It's like "Flick Your Bic" used to be the ad. He talked about giving the tools that people need to lose weight. I think this bill—that's why we're supporting it—in general does some of that.

The member from Windsor West, I think she's like me: She's somewhat surprised how little they are open to amendments. I think there was an opportunity to improve the bill, but it passed by.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we do introduction of guests, I would like to acknowledge that there are quite a few guests today and that we use discretion on how much we use the introduction in making announcements. So please keep it short, and we'll get everybody in.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce Julia Stark, Ken Loucks and Deborah Barker from the local Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Alzheimer Society, and Rosemary Corbett from the Ontario Alzheimer Society.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'd like to welcome Marija Padjen, Julie Foley and Rebekah Churchyard from the Alzheimer Society of Toronto, and also, from my riding, Joanne Oxley; Pam and Stephen Oxley; Eli Park; and John Park, who just became a Canadian citizen.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to introduce, from the Alzheimer Society, Ed Harper, Chantal Ogrodnick, Maureen O'Connell and Debbie Islam, all from the riding of Barrie. Mr. Harper is a former MP. I'd like to welcome them here today.

Mr. Steve Clark: I had a great meeting with Advocis this morning. I'd like to introduce Sean Lawrence, Jacques Duplain, David McGruer, Brandon Durant, Jack McAuley, Angela Houle, Rob Stewart and Roger Rhodes. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I would like to welcome today the aunt of our page captain, Mira Gillis. Her name is Ada Mio, and she's in the public gallery this morning.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the members' west gallery today, we have seven members of Advocis from the great riding of Peterborough: Linda Gratton, Mimi Rogers, Judy Ruttle, Shawn Flannigan, David Jolley, Alex Fischer and Doug Boden. Of course, they're having their meetings and reception later this afternoon here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and welcome Shelley Green and the Alzheimer Society of Oxford to Queen's Park.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: From the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, board member—and also a resident of Burlington—Ted Wheatley. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to welcome representatives from the Alzheimer Society. From my riding here today are Jennifer Gillies, Caitlin Agla, Robin Smart, and Gerard and Monique Laderoute. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would like to introduce four representatives from the Alzheimer Society of Durham Region who are also constituents of mine: Michelle Pepin, Denyse Newton, Bill Lewis and Mike Browne. They're here today for Alzheimer's day. Welcome.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to introduce the Ontario Alzheimer Society. We have a number of members in the House, as we've heard. I'd also like to invite all members to join me at their reception after question period in room 230.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome a good friend of mine from Kitchener, Dennis Yanke, who's here with Advocis today. From the Alzheimer Society in KW, Jennifer Gillies, Caitlin Agla, Robin Smart, and Gerard and Monique Laderoute.

Mr. Paul Miller: I also have guests to introduce from the Alzheimer Society in Hamilton: Connie Bier, Donna McGillivray, Phyllis Fehr and Mary Burnett.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to welcome, from the Alzheimer Society in the wonderful riding of Kingston and the Islands, Vicki Poffley and Janice White.

I'd also like to welcome Will Britton, the president of the Kingston chapter of Advocis, The Financial Advisors Association of Canada; and Ed Bettencourt, Kingston chapter's advocacy chair.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would like all members to help me welcome some very special guests today. Len and Suzy Rodness, co-chairs of Magna Carta Canada, have joined us today with students from Waterdown District High School and also from Toronto Prep School.

With them are their teachers Nick Bridges, Carl Draksler, Nathan Tidridge, Paul Sischy, Matt Mooney and Steve Tsimikalis.

These students have come today at the request of the Speaker, being able to appreciate the value of the Magna Carta.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I hope everyone will join me in welcoming Darren Sweeney and Kevin Bewick. Like many others, Darren and Kevin are here today for the Advocis day at the Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome our friends from Advocis: David McGruer, David Juvet, Roger Thorpe, Dennis Yanke, Roger McMillan, Greg Pollock, Linda Gratton, Al Jones, Aaron Keogh, David Coad and Mimi Rogers. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome, from Bay of Quinte Advocis, Shannon Neely.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The folks from the Alzheimer Society from the Windsor area today will be Sally Bennett Olczak, Marjorie Brown and Tom Noble; and from Advocis, Aaron Keogh and Michellyne Mancini.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I too want to welcome all of the members of Advocis. But I also want to welcome—I'm not sure they're here yet, but I'd like to introduce Varda Feiner and her grandson Isaac Feiner, who I met at the Israeli Independence Day reception. I invited them to join us. I know you will welcome them when they come in.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to welcome Mr. Loren Freid. He is president of the York region Alzheimer Society, one of the 18 societies from all around Ontario that are here today. Welcome.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to welcome Lorraine LeBlanc and Janet Gasparini from the Alzheimer Society in Sudbury. They're here today for advocacy.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome Kathy Wright, the executive director of the Alzheimer Society of Ottawa, with us today.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to introduce two amazing ladies from the Huron Alzheimer Society: Cathy

Ritsema and Linda Finkbeiner. I'd also like to welcome Al Jones from Advocis.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to welcome Mario Spagnuolo, who is the first vice-president of the greater Essex local of ETFO, which represents English public teachers in my area.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome two good friends from Advocis: Nithy Ananth, and Percy up there. I also want to welcome all of the members of the Ontario Lung Association who are here today to support Bill 45.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome the hundreds of people who are arriving here at Queen's Park today as part of the Enough is Enough hydro protest over escalating hydro rates.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Next week is the day against transphobia. I'm very happy to introduce my friends from the trans lobby: Susan Gapka, Davina Hader, Andrew Fraser, Shadmith Manzo and Crystal Manzo. I hope the House will give them a warm welcome.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is my great pleasure to acknowledge and introduce page captain Samantha Lin, from my riding. She is accompanied today by her father, Bo Lin, who is sitting in the public bleachers. Welcome.

Hon. James J. Bradley: From the Alzheimer Society in Niagara: Nancy Rushford, Bea Kraayenhof, Maisie Jackson and David Jackson.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce, from the Alzheimer Society of Perth County, executive director Debbie Deichert and Alzheimer champion Deb Scholl.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have two introductions. I'd like to welcome, from the great riding of York South–Weston, Zakiya Tafari, who is the executive director of Young and Potential Fathers; and his lovely daughter, Nyashia Tafari. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, welcome to Drinks Ontario. We have Heather MacGregor, the executive director; Chris Churchill, president; Andrew von Teichman, vice-president; John Swan, director; and Alex Patinios, chair of the government relations committee. I'd like to welcome them all to Queen's Park. Thank you very much.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to welcome, from the Alzheimer Society of Muskoka and Parry Sound, Karen Quemby and Shelley Raymond, and also Vic Prendergast, who I think is from Brantford.

Also, I'd like to welcome, from Advocis, Bruce Boivin, who is from Huntsville, and Jeff Schreiter and Al Jones, who I met with this morning.

Hon. David Orazietti: I'd like to introduce Eric Barton, who is from my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, from Estate Guard Life, who is here on behalf of Advocis.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Please join me in welcoming Elaine Griffin and Diane Cowen from the Alzheimer Society of Dufferin County.

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Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm pleased to introduce to the House two of my constituents: Katherine and Michael Duncan. They are here with us today as we host Alzheimer's day at Queen's Park. Bienvenue.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'm excited to welcome Broadlands Public School here to the Legislature today.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, please welcome Zeeshan Adhi who is visiting Queen's Park for the very first time.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: On behalf of the member from Nickel Belt, I'd like to welcome Lorraine LeBlanc and Janet Gasparini from the Alzheimer Society in Sudbury.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome a grade 10 class from Campbellford high school, accompanied by teachers Ms. DeGagne, Ms. Campbell and Mr. Milligan, a former MPP from the 40th Parliament.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine from St. Paul's: Rosemary Corbett, who is the president of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is going to step on my announcement—

Mr. Todd Smith: No, I won't do that. But I just wanted to warn the members of cabinet that if they hear, "Do the honourable thing, Minister," coming from behind them—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This is great. I better get order before question period.

To maintain my tradition: The member from Northumberland–Quinte West in the 40th Parliament, Mr. Rob Milligan, is in the gallery.

We also have with us today, representatives of the Brant Alzheimer association: Mary Burnett, Phyllis Fehr, George Montani, Karyn Montani, Jeanette Tootell and, a friend, Vic Prendergast. Welcome.

If you look up, you will see bodies there—with us today in the Speaker's gallery are four interns from Quebec, as part of the Jean-Charles-Bonenfant foundation internship program, to learn about the way we do things here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, escalating hydro rates are having a devastating effect on people here in Ontario. People from my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and all across Ontario are struggling because of the mess you've made of the energy system. Skyrocketing rates are having a devastating effect on real people. They're having to make hard choices. They're having to choose whether to heat or eat. This is because under your disastrous Green Energy Act, you continue to sign contracts for expensive, intermittent, unreliable power. This is forcing hundreds of thousands of families into untenable circumstances.

Minister, how many more hundreds of thousands will be energy poor if you continue down your disastrous path?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I welcome the question. Certainly, hydro rates are a very topical issue. We understand that the investments we made to take a dirty and unreliable system and make it clean and reliable are putting pressures on Ontario families, particularly electric heat in rural areas.

But to help families with their energy bills, we announced further price mitigation measures in our budget—which neither of the opposition parties supported, incidentally—removing the debt retirement charge by the end of this year, two years earlier than planned, saving the average family $70 per year on their hydro bills, and the Ontario Energy Board is implementing the Ontario Electricity Support Program for low- and modest-income families that will save them an average of $360 per year off their bills or $430 when combined with the removal of the DRC.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of other programs, which I'll talk to in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the minister: People have had enough with your government's unaffordable hydro rates. They have come here today from all across Ontario to express their frustration and to let you know that they are fed up. They are here today to tell you that they cannot afford energy at 16.1 cents a kilowatt hour, or what you have dismissively called a cup of coffee.

You are forcing them to choose between heating their homes or putting food on the table. These victims of your reckless energy policies desperately need you to finally show some understanding and compassion.

Minister, will you go out after question period today and face the people you have caused so much harm to, or will you just continue to ignore them?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

I'm now going to implement what I have done last week and this week. The person who starts to talk while I'm standing is going to be named.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I have indicated to my staff that, if they can make arrangements with representatives of the group that will be here today, I would be happy to meet with them in one of the rooms here at Queen's Park or in my office across the way.

We have had tremendous pressure because we've put big investments into the system.

I have a quote here from the member for Simcoe–Grey, former energy minister Jim Wilson. This is the quote that says, "This summer when we didn't have enough electricity in this province," when that government was in power, "and all the air conditioners were running, we had to buy power.... I had to pay $7 million one day to keep the air conditioners on in our hospitals." That's what the acting leader said when he was Minister of Energy.

Since that time, we've invested $34 billion in the system. Not only that, what we did is provide significant mitigation measures to counter those significant investments—

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

Final supplementary. The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Your government continues to claim that Ontario's electricity rates are amongst the most competitive in North America. The fact is that's not accurate. I've sent a provincial comparison of hydro rates to every member of this Legislature that reveals the true cost of the mess that you've made. Ontario's not even remotely competitive. Our all-in hydro cost is more expensive than any other province in Canada. We pay double what Manitoba pays; we pay triple what Quebec pays.

Minister, enough is enough. Will you stop making up your own facts and finally be honest with the people of Ontario and admit that your failed hydro policy has led to the most expensive hydro in the land?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm going to mention a number of programs which we never hear the members opposite mention. The Ontario Clean Energy Benefit is still in place, which represents a 10% discount off the average consumer's bill. We have the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, which can give a senior up to $1,131 per year off their electricity rate. We have the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program in place today, the saveONenergy Home Assistance Program and, for the northerners, the Northern Ontario Energy Credit.

They will send out messages to their constituents with all the rhetoric about high prices. You will never once see them in any of their householders list all the benefits—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —and all the mitigation measures that they can obtain in the system. They don't talk about the good side; they only talk about the bad side.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Time and time again we have asked you to take action to fix skyrocketing hydro rates in this province and you've done nothing. Now, with your removal of the clean energy benefit and the latest 15% increase in time-of-use pricing, Ontarians will have to pay an extra $205 for hydro next year.

People are fed up with your rate increases and they've come here to tell you face to face. Premier, will you join with me and my colleagues after question period on the front lawn and explain to the hundreds of people gathered there—concerned ratepayers—why their hydro rates continue to skyrocket?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy will want to speak to the supplementary, but as the Minister of Energy has said, he is going to be meeting with some of the folks from the group who are outside because it's very important that the people who are concerned about this issue get the whole story; that they get the whole story about the mitigations that have been put in place by our government.

The reality is that we had to make the investments in the energy system that we have made in order for it to be reliable.

When I ran for office in 2002-03—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I wish I could find the one who said that.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I ran for office in 2002-03, door after door, people were worried about the reliability of the system; they were worried about whether the lights were going to go on because of the brownouts and blackouts that were happening across the province. We've dealt with that. We have a reliable system, and we need that in order for our residents and our businesses to be able to thrive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier: Nepean–Carleton residents are also paying sky-high hydro bills like elsewhere in the province. They've been subjected to not just infrastructure improvements but to a disastrous wind energy scam, the smart meter debacle, cancelled gas plants and a growing, inefficient Hydro bureaucracy.

They're paying more for their hydro bill today because this government is making a mess out of the hydro system. All of this while some of my residents in Nepean–Carleton are serviced by Hydro One, while others are serviced by the less expensive and better-managed Hydro Ottawa. Both the chair of Hydro Ottawa and the mayor of Ottawa have reached out to the province for a more equitable arrangement for hydro users in rural and suburban Ottawa.

Will the Premier commit today to a better electricity arrangement for the rural residents and suburban residents of Ottawa so that they can be serviced by Hydro Ottawa?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to wade into the details of that discussion. As the member opposite knows, there will be a new board in place at Hydro One, and it will be up to that company, which will be an improved and more efficient company, to deal with those issues.

I want to go to a comment that the member made at the beginning of her question. She talked about her constituents being subjected to infrastructure improvements. That is a very, very telling phrase. What it says is that that party and the people across the floor don't believe in improving infrastructure; don't believe in making updates to the electricity system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's coming from both sides, but the member from Nepean–Carleton asked the question. Come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like an answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It sounds to me like the member is challenging the chair. Would you like to do that?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No. I was just challenging the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You are now challenging me.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite fundamentally believes that making the kinds of upgrades that were needed in the electricity system, investing in the infrastructure that is needed in this province, is not the way to go and, in fact, it subjects Ontarians to some kind of hardship. We categorically reject that argument.

Interjections.

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

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, final supplementary.

Mr. Bill Walker: To the Minister of Energy: As you're aware, long-term-care operators across Ontario are facing major increases in their hydro bills. Nursing homes do not have sufficient ongoing funding to keep up with your skyrocketing electricity rates. As a result, service levels will decline and the 100,000 vulnerable seniors housed there will suffer.

Minister, will you stand in your place today and give assurance that you will fix your hydro mess and stop forcing seniors' homes to use care funding to offset the effect of your skyrocketing electricity rates?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I indicated earlier today a quote from the member from Simcoe–Grey about the mess the system was in. We've invested $34 billion into the system. It was a dirty system; it's now a clean system. It's a healthy system from those investments.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The system was not reliable. There were blackouts and brownouts across the province of Ontario under that administration. We have a system that is clean; we have a system that is reliable as a result of those investments. Yes, it has put pressure on prices.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Second time for the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I've listed the mitigation measures we've put in place and we're continuing to put in place with the new low-income support program and taking the debt retirement charge off.

That government made the mess. They have no positive recommendations whatsoever other than to stand there and yell and scream. That's disgraceful.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Everyone knows that this government has never met a panel or a study that it didn't like. In 2013, the Liberal government had over 30 panels and studies. Since January of this year, the government has had 18 more that have been initiated, including one about where to sell Bud Light in the province of Ontario.

Now, it appears that last week the Liberals finally changed their ways and they decided to ram the Hydro One sell-off through the Legislature without any real public scrutiny or debate at all. Yesterday they rang bells so that the House couldn't debate the fact that the Premier was shutting down democracy in this chamber.

Can the Premier explain why it is that she's spending months upon months on public consultations on new systems for how to pay traffic tickets, but shutting down debate on Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I appreciate the question. I think the member opposite knows quite well the amount of debate that has taken place on our budget bill, Building Ontario Up, and not to mention the amount—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You rang bells on your own debate. What are you talking about?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. That's not to mention the amount of public hearings that had taken place before the tabling of the budget.

As has been mentioned before, the Minister of Finance had about six pre-budget consultations held across Ontario. It was in cities and towns like Windsor, London, Toronto, Mississauga, Cambridge and Ottawa. And the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs visited towns like Fort Frances, Sudbury, Ottawa, Cornwall, Fort Erie, Toronto and London to speak to Ontarians and make sure that budget—

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In not one of those public consultations did this government or did any of those MPPs admit to the people that they were going to be selling off Hydro One. That is the fact. Every single person and every single business in this province will pay for the privatizing of Hydro One. Bills have already quadrupled since privatization began in this province, and there's only going to be a faster increase in rates if Liberals go ahead with the privatization of Hydro One.

But Ontarians won't get their say at hearings, nor will their elected representatives be able to get any opportunity, because in less than an hour—in less than an hour from right now—the Liberals are going to pass a closure motion and shut down democratic process in this Legislature.

My question is, why is this Premier so disrespectful of this Legislature, and why has she no intention to listen to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: This government and this Premier are always listening to the people, and in consultation after consultation after consultation from the people of Ontario, they are telling us that they want their government to invest in infrastructure. They are telling us that they want their government to invest in public transit and transportation infrastructure across the province. They're telling us that we need to invest in critically important infrastructure like roads and bridges. What the opposition is doing is they are denying that reality by not wanting to invest in infrastructure and, in fact, delaying those very critical investments that are such a key part of our budget, Building Ontario Up.

That is what the Premier is doing: She's making an unprecedented investment, $130 billion over 10 years, in infrastructure so that we continue to build Ontario up and prepare our province for success in the 21st century.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has spent months and months consulting and studying how people pay parking tickets in the province of Ontario. She's spending months trying to figure out where to sell a 12-pack of Bud Light, but when there is an issue that affects every single Ontarian—skyrocketing hydro bills—the Premier shuts down democratic debate and refuses to hear from people.

1100

It's clear that this Premier will do anything and everything to avoid transparency and to avoid accountability. She is shutting down debate in the Legislature. She's ringing bells. She's ramming through her Hydro sell-off right through this House. Why is the Premier refusing to hear from Ontarians who can't afford her Hydro sell-off?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, with all due respect, we disagree with the leader of the third party, because we are having very robust debate on this budget bill right in this House. Not to mention, we have proposed to have six days of hearings in the committee, way more hearings than any other opposition parties, when they were government, ever conducted in the committee.

Let me remind the member opposite: When her party was in office, how much time did they give their budget documents to be debated and considered in the committee? In 1991, the NDP—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Right on the edge.

Finish, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: In 1991, the NDP allowed for only one day of committee consideration on the budget bill; in

1992, only one day of budget consideration in the committee; in 1993 and 1994, zero days.

Mr. Paul Miller: Not on Hydro.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Premier is cutting half a billion dollars out of education. On top of that, schools are going to have to pay the price for the selling off of Hydro. The Liberal Minister of Education was right when she—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal Minister of Education was right when she said, "The privatization of Hydro One will further exacerbate already underfunded school board budgets."

My question is this: What is the Premier going to do? What is she going to cut out of our kids' education next so that school boards can afford to keep the lights on and the schools warm during the winter?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm not sure whether to start with a lesson on fractions where 248—anyway.

Could we talk about this whole issue, though, of—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: If you look back at the time, you would find that everybody, including the government of the day's own consultant, agreed that school boards were underfunded by $1 billion. Since I made that statement, we have added $8 billion.

Now, another thing you might like to know, Speaker, was that in the original funding formula, the transfer to school boards to pay the utilities had actually been frozen.

We have changed that. We now increase the funding every year so that boards can pay for the utilities and that's no—

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Hospital budgets in Ontario have had eight years of funding that hasn't even kept up with inflation, and for four years those budgets have been frozen—four years in a row.

Hospitals are also going to have to grapple with paying the price for the privatization of Hydro One. When hydro bills skyrocket, hospitals are going to have to find that money somewhere. What's the Premier going to cut out of hospitals next so that they can keep their lights on and maintain the medical equipment that people rely on to keep their lives safe and well?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, under this government, the school board funding has gone up 56%. The funding per pupil has gone up 59%. Just as a matter of information, teachers' wages have gone up 24.5%. The cost of living has gone up 21%. I think she better check her math.

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

Interjections.

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All Ontarians need to do is look at the chaos in the school system: Nothing to crow about, Minister.

Hydro bills will skyrocket if the Premier privatizes Hydro One. It means families and businesses are going to be paying more, but it also means that school boards are going to be paying more. It means that hospitals are going to be paying more. It is going to hurt service agencies. It is going to hurt not-for-profits. If they pay a hydro bill, they're going to pay more. Groups that help the most vulnerable and that have to be careful with every dime will be paying the price for this Liberal Premier's sell-off of Hydro One.

Will she stop that sell-off today and do right by the people of Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let's look at the context in which I was concerned about the privatization, the sell-off of Hydro One. In that context, the Tories were going to sell off 100% in a fire sale, all at the same time. That's not what we're doing.

What we're doing is retaining 40% ownership. We're not selling it all at once in a fire sale; we're doing it in a measured way, no more than 15% at a time, so that we can maximize—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One wrap-up sentence, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: In fact, the context is totally different, and I stand by our school board funding compared to either of the other parties opposite.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

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

The opportunity was missed earlier. I beg your indulgence for a request for unanimous consent for the wearing of buttons. I will ask for that request now to ensure that we all fall within the guidelines of the House.

The member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent for members to wear buttons in recognition of the Ontario Alzheimer Society.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton is seeking unanimous consent to wear the buttons for Alzheimer's. Do we agree? Agreed.

Buttons are made available to all caucuses on each side of the House.

We will now resume question period.

New question.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is to the Premier. We all know that the three striking school boards have filed a motion with the labour relations board, and we really believe that's a waste of time.

The bottom line is that the Liberal government is responsible for the issues that will get the students back in the classroom. The two-tiered Bill 122 is the real problem. The buck stops with Minister Sandals, and it is the Wynne Liberals who are failing Ontario students.

Premier, will you finally take responsibility and get—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry for the interruption. The discussions that are going on between other members are not acceptable. It stops. The member has to put his question properly.

Carry on.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Premier, will you finally take responsibility, quit dithering and get the students back in the classroom?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows that there is a collective bargaining process that is under way. It's a challenging round of negotiations; there is no doubt about that. We have said that there is no new money for compensation. There are issues that the members need to work out, both at the local level and at the central table. The fact is that we need to let that process unfold because where the deal is going to be found is at the table.

I know the member opposite doesn't support the collective bargaining process. That was evident when they were in office. We believe that it is an important part of labour relations, so we support that collective bargaining process. The answers need to be found at the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Back to the Premier: Premier, there were no negotiations yesterday. There are no bargaining talks. Some 22,000 students right now have been out of the classroom for their 16th day.

You were supposed to light a fire under the negotiations. We haven't even seen a spark yet. Do you need to borrow some kindling? Maybe we could use that stupid budget you presented.

1110

All we see are helpless school boards taking the heat for your mismanagement. The Liberal government must step up, take responsibility, quit dithering and get the students back in the classroom.

Premier, when will you get the 72,000 students in Ontario back in the classroom? Make it happen today.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will just say to the member opposite that it is not helpful for the collective bargaining process to be held in public. It has to be a process that happens at the table. It has to be a confidential process.

What I will say to the member opposite is that the OSSTF support staff are actually negotiating today. They are at the table. The conversations that are happening are happening in a confidential manner. The agreements have to be found at the table.

Look, I want the kids back in school. I want the teachers and the support staff in school. That's where they all want to be, and that is where we want them to be. We are doing everything in our power to make sure that we find those agreements at the table. It is a difficult process, and I acknowledge that. But we take responsibility for our role in making that happen, getting those agreements at the table.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. The Premier insists that selling Hydro One is essential, even though it pays for less than 3% of her infrastructure promises. But the truth is, it might pay for a lot less than 3%.

Dr. Douglas Peters, chief economist with TD Bank for 26 years and a former federal secretary of state, and his colleague Dr. David Peters say the council "believes that Hydro One could have a value in the marketplace of $13.5 billion to $15 billion. We think the council is too optimistic, and that $10.6 billion is a more likely valuation."

Premier, isn't it true that the net $4 billion you say will come from your fire sale could, in fact, be a lot lower?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to speak to the supplementary, but let me just say this: The whole reason we are embarking on this process, the whole reason we ran on reviewing our assets and using them to leverage the building of new assets for this century and for our kids and our grandkids, is that that infrastructure needs to be built.

What we hear from the third party is basically, "Do nothing. Don't do it. Don't make those investments. Don't build those roads and bridges and transit. Just sit back and pretend that somehow our economy is going to grow and that our communities are going to thrive if we don't make those investments." That is not the case, Mr. Speaker. They will not thrive unless we make those investments. That's what government exists to do: put the conditions in place for economic growth and prosperity. That's why we're making those investments—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier says she'll get $4 billion for selling Hydro One, and the cost is higher hydro bills for families and businesses and Ontarians losing control of an asset that's too important to give away.

And according to senior economists, the truth is that the $4-billion figure is probably inflated, which means that that money isn't going to make the difference to infrastructure that needs to be made.

Does the Premier have anything other than a wing and a prayer to back up her claim that selling Hydro will give us $4 billion?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite is making a lot of speculation which actually harms the opportunities to create greater value—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: That actually precludes us from creating greater value from that corporation.

The bottom line is, we are assessing. We are going to foster the conditions necessary to provide the maximum value for a very precious crown corporation that we all value. In order for us to ensure that we make it secure, we work in the best interests of the public, and that is what we're doing here because we're reinvesting, dollar for dollar, all of that money into another project to generate even more revenue and more returns.

Mr. Speaker, that's in the best interests of the public, and that is what we're doing.

AGRICULTURAL TRADE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. The Cambridge Farmers' Market has operated since 1830, supporting our local farmers. My constituents in Cambridge and North Dumfries township already buy local products, so they were very pleased when the Premier announced her agri-food growth challenge. The challenge aims to double the agri-food sector's rate of growth and create 120,000 new jobs by 2020.

Ontarians working in the agriculture sector, like the many farmers in my riding, are excited about the potential benefits to their businesses. Many agricultural and food companies in my community employ over 50 workers, such as Frito Lay Canada, Loblaw Companies, Dover Flour Mills and Grand River Foods.

Speaker, could the minister tell the House what steps the government is taking to contribute to the agri-food growth challenge?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity, and I want to thank the honourable member from Cambridge for asking the question.

Outreaching to the world is a key driver of our economy. Just last month, I had the pleasure of joining Minister Leal for the first-ever minister-led agricultural trade mission to China. Expanding trade is a key part of developing and strengthening Ontario industries. China is a priority market for Ontario and is one of the province's key Asian markets.

In 2014, Ontario's total agri-food sales to China, including exports to Hong Kong, reached over $800 billion, representing Ontario's second-largest export market for agri-food products.

Trade missions like these allow us opportunities to showcase Ontario's exports.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you to the minister for sharing an update on the agri-food growth challenge. I'm glad that the minister spoke about his recent mission to China. I think we can all agree that by expanding our trade opportunities, it can only mean good things for our economy. In my riding of Cambridge, over 76% of companies in the food and agricultural sector have reported exporting product to other countries.

Ontario's agri-food sector is, in my opinion, the best in the world. We have some phenomenal products, and they deserve to be showcased worldwide. In particular, trading partners like China need to be able to see what we have to offer.

Speaker, could the minister speak more about the recent mission to China and the benefits that all Ontarians will see as a result?

Hon. Michael Chan: Of course, I'm happy to do that. Speaker, 20 Ontario businesses and organizations accompanied us to help promote trade opportunities to over 300 Chinese agri-food and government officials. This mission produced some great results for Ontario's agricultural sector.

For example, Futurevic Global Sourcing signed a letter of intent to purchase $2 million worth of Ontario maple products in the next two years. Pillitteri Estates signed a $6-million agreement that would bring more Ontario ice wine to China. Vineland Estates Winery announced a retailing and distribution agreement that will see more than $1 million of its products sold in China.

As well, we have landed three reverse trade missions coming to Ontario later this year.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, too many Ontarians are getting to the point now where they're having to choose between heating and eating.

For one family in North Hastings who contacted my office, energy poverty is a reality. They've set up payment plans twice with Hydro One, only to end up defaulting both times. Last year, when their child had to have surgery and unexpected expenses arose, they found themselves unable to set up further payment plan arrangements. Their complaints fell on deaf ears with the utility. My office had to work to get them a one-month extension. My office has become an unofficial complaints department for Hydro One.

On May 1, just two weeks ago, electricity rates went up by another 15%. Minister, why is your Liberal electricity policy such a failure? Will you fix it and will you stop forcing families to choose between heating and eating?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, for the record, the Ontario Energy Board announced an increase of 4.6%. We've heard many, many other numbers over there.

There are a significant number of people across the province who are finding pressures—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned, whether he's in his seat or not.

1120

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, what I have never seen is any member of the Progressive Conservative Party, such as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, actually sending out to their constituents the list of all the mitigation measures that are available in the province of Ontario, starting with the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program, the saveONenergy Home Assistance Program and, in the north, a very significant tax credit for customers.

For those people who are stretched financially and it is a serious problem, the LDCs work with them on a one-on-one basis across the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: To the Minister of Energy: Hydro One's smart meter system does not work in rural Ontario, and the system of estimating usage results in chaotic, wrongful hydro bills that are very high, as much as twice as high as neighbours in urban areas that are served by Hydro Ottawa.

When the city was created in 2001, one of the conditions was that all residents of the new city would become customers of Hydro Ottawa. Minister, you can finish the job you should have done 14 years ago, when you were mayor of Ottawa. There are 43,000 Hydro One customers in rural Ottawa. Minister, will you honour the agreement of 2001 and transfer these 43,000 customers to Hydro Ottawa, where they should be?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, there is a systemic problem we have, which was created by former Premier Harris. In 1999, when he legislated amalgamation across the province in the cities of Ottawa, Sudbury, Hamilton and a number of others, he also amalgamated LDCs, but he left stranded in the system Hydro One customers who were within other city boundaries.

Yes, as mayor, I tried to negotiate a solution, as all the other mayors across the province had.

We are now talking to Hydro Ottawa, but we also have to talk to Sudbury, Hamilton and all the other cities where Mike Harris created this problem.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTES

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Students in Durham, northern Ontario's Rainbow district and Peel region have been without classes for weeks. Over 800,000 elementary students and their families face an uncertain future as educators undertake job action. I'm reminding the Premier of this because it doesn't seem like her government is doing anything to move this process along.

Will the Premier finally acknowledge that the utter failure of contract talks falls at the feet of her government, and actually work to bring school boards and education workers together, rather than driving them apart?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: It's precisely because we want to bring all the parties together that we actually created the new legislation. We wanted to have the boards at the table, we wanted to have the union at the table, we wanted to have the government at the table, so that all three parties can come together and create a solution.

It's precisely because we believe in negotiated solutions that we are still working very, very hard at the table. We have nine different tables going, and we're working very, very hard at each of those tables to get collective agreements. We know it's going to be difficult. We know it has been slow.

We believe that the way to get the issues resolved is at the table, and there's no way to do this other than negotiating solutions, and we will keep working at that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Again to the Premier: It's this government that implemented the current bargaining legislation. It's this government that cut $250 million in education—Minister, it's on page 230 of your own budget; maybe you should check your facts—and forced the closure of 88 schools and cut vital special education programs.

It's this government's underfunding that put 21 early childhood educator jobs in Windsor and Essex county and 50 educational assistant positions and ECEs in Bruce-Grey on the chopping block. Now this Liberal government is continuing to fail families by dragging their feet in negotiations and blaming everyone else but themselves for the chaos in our schools.

When will this government finally accept responsibility for throwing our schools into chaos and work with education workers—the key word is "with"—to get students back to class?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think we need to go back and look at what happened during the development of our collective bargaining legislation. We actually worked with every one of the unions, with all four school board associations, and we worked together to draft that legislation. We went around and around and around. We looked at first drafts and made some changes. We looked at second drafts. We looked at some changes that the NDP suggested and incorporated some suggestions that the NDP made in terms of the collective bargaining legislation. Everybody involved worked together to make that collective bargaining legislation a reality, and we've worked together to decide which are central issues and which are local issues. That was negotiated. We have minutes of settlement where we've agreed—

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

New question.

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Ontario's economic landscape is changing. Economic development and job growth in Ontario's small and rural communities continue to face unique challenges.

In my riding of Halton, the Country Heritage Agricultural Society and the Milton Education Village Innovation Centre are two local projects that have benefited from the government's support of rural economic growth. They've used the government's support to develop and promote new business opportunities across the region.

Throughout the province there are programs like these, designed to assist rural communities, including the Eastern Ontario Development Fund and the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could the minister please update the House on what our government is doing to strengthen rural economies?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Halton for her question this morning. I know the great work that she does with the agriculture associations within her riding of Halton.

The RED Program is a program that has transcended various administrations in the province of Ontario. In fact, I believe it was the member from Oxford who actually brought the RED Program into being. It is the Rural Economic Development Program. It provides $14.5 million on an annual basis, helping rural communities and regions grow their economies, attract investment and invest in their skills.

Through RED since 2003, we've invested over $180 million in 565 projects, generating over $1.2 billion in economic activity and indeed creating and supporting over 36,000 jobs in rural Ontario. We'll continue to work and strengthen rural communities in every part of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the minister for his answer. It's great to hear that the Ontario government takes the economic needs of small and rural communities seriously. I know that business owners in my riding will be happy to know that our government is committed to supporting their goals of providing goods, services and job opportunities for Halton residents.

The RED Program, as you mentioned, has a strong record of job creation, economic growth and helping rural communities prosper across Ontario. But, Minister, I have heard that the RED Program is temporarily pausing application intakes to conduct a review. I'm sure many rural communities will be interested in the types of RED projects that it will now focus on.

Speaker, could the minister please elaborate on the kinds of projects the RED Program will support?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thank the member from Halton for her supplementary. In fact, the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame, which is a great facility, is actually located in her riding of Halton.

To ensure the RED Program continues to meet expectations for industry, community organizations and municipalities, my ministry is temporarily pausing application intakes to conduct a thorough program review. We know that to be competitive we must become more innovative and flexible. That's why the RED Program will continue to focus on those high-value, low-cost projects that create jobs and build a foundation for economic growth and investment.

1130

For example—here's a great one. The Oxford Cattle Co. Ltd. is receiving a half million dollars to implement a pilot fueling hub that creates new natural gas blends to sell to consumers in rural Ontario.

RED projects show off the innovation and community partnerships that are emblematic of rural Ontario. I know by working together, we'll strengthen rural communities right across this great province.

HYDRO TRANSMISSION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, your government's delays on a crucial hydro transmission project are costing Leamington jobs and investment. Nature Fresh Farms recently announced that they would be expanding in Ohio. Leamington lost out on 300 jobs and $200 million in investments because of your government's inaction.

In 2011, I asked former finance minister Dwight Duncan about this issue, and he said, "We're now ready to move to construction." Minister, it's 2015, and no plans have ever been confirmed. Given all the broken promises, local officials are outraged because more businesses are saying they're looking elsewhere.

Minister, Leamington needs to know if you are willing to move this vital power project forward. Are you?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We've adopted a program of responding specifically to the growers in that particular area. We've created combined heat and power. We're going through a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to remind both the member from Prince Edward–Hastings and the deputy government House leader that when the mikes are on, you're taking advantage, and I'm not going to let you anymore.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In fact, we're in the process of doing procurements right now to satisfy that industry in your community.

But we have been rebuilding this system now for the last 10 years because of the mess they made. I want to repeat the quote. This is from the member for Simcoe–Grey in 2001, when he was Minister of Energy: "This summer when we didn't have enough electricity in this province ... and all the air conditioners were running, we had to buy power.... I had to pay $7 million one day to keep the air conditioners on in our hospitals."

Mr. Speaker, we've invested in a reliable system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Leader of the Opposition will come to order—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. And the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex will come to order.

Carry on. Wrap up.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We've created a clean and reliable system—so clean that we've taken the equivalent of seven million cars off the road.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member for York–Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, it is essential for Ontarians to have access to affordable electricity. Expensive electricity has and will continue to destabilize our province if you don't change direction.

The lights go on; the day begins. Hospital rooms operate. Businesses make money and provide jobs. No one in Ontario can live without electricity. People depend on it.

Minister, your energy policy takes advantage of our dependence on electricity. We are captive consumers. Your policy has destabilized day-to-day life.

Billions wasted on smart meters, the Green Energy Act and clandestine gas plant cover-ups: You just keep handing the ever-increasing bill to ratepayers. Why are you bent on destroying any prospect of affordable electricity, which is so essential to the social and economic value of our province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Over the course of the last 10 years, we have spent $34 billion in the system, creating generation, transmission and building a clean system. We've built the new tunnel in Niagara, a $1.2-billion investment. We've expanded hydro in northern Ontario through the Lower Mattagami, a $2.6-billion investment in the system.

We have an extremely reliable system, but in the process of rebuilding the system, we have built it clean. We got rid of 25% of our generation, which was dirty coal. We are saving $4 billion a year on environmental and health costs by creating a clean system. We are one of the best, if not the best, in North America. It's the largest emissions reduction program in North America. It's a record we're proud of, and we're continuing in that direction.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The Union Pearson Express will run every 15 minutes from 5:30 in the morning to 1 a.m. each night. Heavy, noisy, dirty, diesel trains will run past homes, playgrounds and schools. Yet the government doesn't seem to care about this disruption, even now, with construction ongoing 24/7. It means children can't sleep at night and people can't live in their homes.

What will the government do to address the concerns of residents in all ridings up and down the tracks?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Members will come to order.

The question has been put.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park, not only for the question today, but also for the correspondence that she has sent to me earlier this month. I also want to acknowledge the work of my colleagues the member from York South–Weston and the member from Davenport, who have communicated with me, my ministry and the team at Metrolinx on a regular basis regarding the Union Pearson Express.

I believe the member is aware of the fact that, back in 2012, there was considerable work undertaken by way of a study to determine what kind of noise mitigation was required along this corridor. As a result of the work that was undertaken in that assessment, Speaker, there are a number of noise walls that are under construction. I understand those identified as being required in that initial study are going to be completed by the time the Union Pearson Express comes into service, which of course is June 6.

Work is being undertaken. I know the team at Metrolinx has folks on the ground trying their best to work closely with the members, but also with the community itself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The government in this instance is so desperate to get this project done in time for the games that construction crews right now are keeping residents awake all night, 24 hours a day, with jackhammers and heavy equipment. The intense construction is even damaging the foundations of neighbouring homes.

Mr. Speaker, residents want a clear answer and they need one now. What will the government do now to compensate them for construction damage and disruption?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank the member for the question. I didn't point out in my initial answer that in fact Metrolinx has done extensive consultation, working closely with the communities affected by the construction of the Union Pearson Express. For example, Metrolinx publicly recruited members for eight committees and over 150 community members signed up to participate. Metrolinx also conducted 24 committee meetings with the community over the course of that time.

I mentioned the noise mitigation measures that are currently under construction that will continue to be constructed.

Metrolinx also has a property damage claims process to deal with any damage that might arise from this work.

But Speaker, I should point out the Union Pearson Express is a clear example of the wonderful outcome that we can achieve when we work together to build infrastructure. It comes into service on June 6 on time, on budget. For the first time ever, it's a dedicated air-rail link between Union Station and Pearson airport.

Interjections.

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

New question.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr. Arthur Potts: What a great segue into my question. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, who is doing a great job in helping build Ontario up.

To quote the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, since the global recession, "we've seen a rebirth in manufacturing" in Ontario. Last month alone, Ontario's manufacturing sector gained 1,200 new positions, and almost 800 positions the month before. Our government understands that more work is needed to keep this sector on a positive path forward. Our budget outlines some of that work.

Last night, I held a town hall meeting in my riding of Beaches–East York and was asked about the great programs and initiatives in this year's budget to help our province's manufacturing sector continue to grow.

Would the minister please inform this House about how this year's budget is helping Ontario's manufacturing sector?

1140

Hon. Brad Duguid: I must say, the member is doing his share in Beaches–East York as well in building up Ontario and building up his community.

I'm delighted to respond to that, because this budget does so much for our economy and so much for our manufacturing sector. If you go back to 2007, the number one ask of our business community, through the Jobs and Prosperity Council, was to increase the accelerated deduction for investments in manufacturing and processing machinery. We were pleased to do it back then, but this deduction was due to expire in 2015-16.

I'm very pleased that our finance minister saw the wisdom, through this budget, if passed, of extending this important deduction for another 10 years. Why is that important, Mr. Speaker? It's an incentive for manufacturers to keep investing in upgrading their machinery, investing in upgrading their plants and creating jobs across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would really like to thank the minister for that update and especially for continuing the deduction for accelerated depreciation.

It's important to note that our corporate income tax rate in Ontario is almost 13 percentage points lower than the average rate in the United States, between federal and provincial taxes, and this is partially responsible for Ontario being a top jurisdiction for direct foreign investments. This extended deduction will make Ontario even more competitive as a manufacturing jurisdiction for manufacturers from around the world.

This deduction is not the only program that is helping our province's manufacturing sector continue to grow. Would the minister please inform the House on these other programs that are included in this year's budget that will help foster growth in this key Ontario sector and help create jobs to support all Ontarians and to support our tax revenue base?

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the NDP for their continued heckles all along the way. They've got me smiling.

Mr. Speaker, we've taken a number of provisions in this budget beyond what I just talked about. For instance, we're increasing the Jobs and Prosperity Fund by $200 million to $2.7 billion. That's going to help us expand that into the forestry sector, which is important to a number of our northern members. It's also going to help us to continue to secure those important manufacturing mandates, like Honda's expansion in Alliston, an $857-billion investment in this province.

We're also continuing, in this budget, the Southwestern Ontario and Eastern Ontario Development Funds. Let me talk a little bit about their impact. We've invested $120 million as a government. It has leveraged $1.3 billion of private sector investment, creating 31,000 jobs.

This budget will continue to create jobs, build our economy and build—

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

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question to the Premier. Constituents from Parry Sound–Muskoka boarded a bus to Queen's Park this morning to send you a message: Your government needs to get hydro rates under control. It's reached the point that people are afraid to open their hydro bill each month.

Among the hundreds of hydro complaints I've received, Dana from Trout Creek wrote me: "Huge bills from Hydro One are going to cause us to go bankrupt," adding that her family's income is only slightly higher than what qualifies for any form of government assistance.

Instead of providing assurances on hydro rates for Ontario families, this month you raised the on-peak hydro rates 15% to 16.1 cents per kilowatt hour.

Premier, why is your government turning a deaf ear to people like Dana and making no attempt to keep hydro rates from climbing even higher?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy has said repeatedly this morning, in response to questions on this issue, that we're very acutely aware of the situation where people are struggling, where they need support. That's why the programs that we have put in place are targeted at those people.

The fact is that we inherited an energy system that was degraded, that needed to be built up. We've done that, and there is a cost associated with that. We acknowledge that. But I hope that the member opposite, in his office, when people come in to talk to him about their energy rates—I hope that he points them to the programs that they might qualify for, because he knows full well that

there are programs that are targeted specifically at people who are struggling with their energy bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: To the Premier: In Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, hydro's mismanagement of its billing practices, as well as your unaffordable green energy charges, are a source of pain and financial ruin. The local conservation authority received an unjustifiable $50,000 bill after it had already been removed from its bank account, and it has been fighting Hydro to no avail.

The Maple Ridge Centre was advised that an old meter had been disconnected when in reality it hadn't been, and after two years of paying $12,000 a year, it received an additional $25,000 bill that Hydro is refusing to drop.

Across Ontario, individuals, businesses, agencies and charities are having to shoulder the economic costs of your mismanagement of the energy file. How do you justify bringing electricity poverty to the province, which should instead be the economic engine of Canada?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, there have been many questions along this line asked this morning. The Minister of Energy has been very clear about the fact that we had to make investments—there was a degraded energy system; there is a cost associated with those—and that we have worked very hard to put programs in place and to make decisions that actually would take costs out of the system: renegotiating contracts and putting downward pressure on rates.

Underlying this question is a question about the nature of Hydro One and whether that is a company that could be run better. I expect that the member opposite agrees with us that it is a company that could be run better; that we should do everything in our power to make sure it is run well. That is exactly part of the initiative that we are undertaking as a result of the recommendations from Ed Clark and his panel. It needs to be a better-run company for the people of this province.

ANNUAL REPORT, CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2013-14 annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for allocation of time on Bill 91, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts.

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

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On May 11, Mr. Naqvi moved government notice of motion 21. Mr. Clark then moved an amendment to Mr. Naqvi's motion. Mr. Bradley then moved an amendment to Mr. Clark's amendment.

We will first deal with Mr. Bradley's amendment to the amendment, which is as follows: That the amendment to the motion be amended as follows—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

All those in favour of Mr. Bradley's amendment to the amendment, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMeekin, Ted
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Orazietti, David
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	Hudak, Tim	Singh, Jagmeet
DiNovo, Cheri	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLaren, Jack	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Forster, Cindy	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 56; the nays are 44.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the amendment to the amendment carried.

We will now deal with Mr. Clark's amendment to the motion, as amended, which is as follows: That the motion be amended by deleting everything following "the bill shall"—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment, as amended, carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The motion is carried.

Mr. Steve Clark: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On division.

We will now deal with Mr. Naqvi's motion, as amended, which is as follows: "That, pursuant to standing order 47"—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion, as amended, carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Steve Clark: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carried on division. The motion, as amended, is carried.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2015 / Projet de loi 6, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

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

On December 9, 2014, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 6.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Dunlop, Garfield
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Gretzky, Lisa
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Hoggarth, Ann
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hudak, Tim
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina
Martow, Gila
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonell, Jim
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
Orazietti, David
Pettapiece, Randy
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Vernile, Daiene
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 99; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated May 12, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

VISITORS

VISITEURS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to invite all members to room 351 for a reception honouring the Mallorytown Glassworks display at Queen's Park. I have a number of constituents here. They're very proud of this display on the first floor, so I hope you'll see it. If you're available, please come to room 351 between 2 and 3 this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Adrian and Andrew Le Coyte and their father, David Le Coyte, are here today from the United Kingdom. They're here to watch the legislative proceedings, and I want to welcome them here.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, it gives me great pleasure to introduce two of my distinguished constituents, Katherine and Michael Duncan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt.

Mme France Gélinas: Lorraine LeBlanc et Janet Gasparini sont venues de Sudbury pour les présentations d'Alzheimer. Je voulais leur souhaiter la bienvenue.

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

The House recessed from 1202 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: This morning, I introduced Shelley Green of the Alzheimer Society of Oxford, and I forgot to introduce Heather Wilson-Boast and Jaclyn Turpin. They were also here this morning, and they're still here this afternoon. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm delighted to welcome two people from my constituency: Glenn Marais and David Robinson. They're here today to talk to us about Say My Name Canada. Welcome.

Mr. Bill Walker: They're not in the House right now, but they were here earlier for a tour of Queen's Park: Georgian Bay school, a school from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. We welcome them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to welcome to the chamber today Beth Robinson of my community, from Kingston and the Islands.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You're probably getting sick of this over these last five weeks, but today I have my wife, Jane, up there in the audience, and my granddaughter Rachel, who was a page here three years ago. They're here to see Madison once again. You can kind of tell; I know the looks don't come from me, but now you know where they come from.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You just bought yourself some real brownie points for that one.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just want to introduce my EA, Theresa Lubowitz, and Domenic Bitondo, who is interning in my office this summer.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. I just want to thank you for greeting a delegation from the Thousand Islands who are here today. They're coming into the chamber right now. They're from many municipalities, but I want to especially mention two local mayors who are here: Erika Demchuk from the town of Gananoque, and Roger Haley from the township of Front of Yonge.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I also want to thank members from my riding who came down by bus today for the Enough is Enough hydro protest today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

Mr. Bill Walker: In celebration of Naturopathic Medicine Week, I'm pleased to rise today in the House in recognition of naturopathic doctors in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and across the province. Naturopathic doctors are at the forefront of health and preventive medicine in communities throughout Ontario. They're opening their doors and conducting free healthy living seminars and providing information and education on the benefits of naturopathic medicine.

While this week would normally be cause for celebration for these health professionals, the government's proposed regulations, which will prevent NDs from accessing necessary and essential laboratory tests and result in the shuffling of patients between NDs' offices, are dampening the celebration.

NDs and their patients in my community are concerned about their ability to provide continuity of care to their patients and the limitations placed on them to provide the exemplary, safe and effective care NDs have demonstrated over the last 90 years.

As Ontarians are aging and chronic diseases are becoming more prevalent, we should be striving to make NDs an equal partner in our health care system, helping them to integrate prevention and to provide diagnosis and treatment to patients. Every day, thousands of Ontarians depend on the services of naturopathic doctors, which are a blend of conventional, traditional and natural medicine, to deliver an annualized and collaborative approach to health care.

The Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors represents the vast majority of licensed naturopathic doctors in Ontario. To connect with an ND near your community, please visit www.oand.org.

On behalf of my constituents, I thank these dedicated doctors for all they do to support the health needs of all Ontarians and would encourage the government to do the same.

VETERANS' PLACE

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, last Friday I was honoured to attend the opening ceremony for Veterans' Place at Gore Park in Hamilton. It was fitting that the ceremony was held on the 70th anniversary of Nazi Germany's unconditional surrender, VE day, the end of World War II in Europe.

Veterans' Place grew from the desire to recognize Gore Park as a place where military service has been continually commemorated for over 90 years. The cenotaph in Gore Park has been standing since 1923.

The new memorial wall is a wonderful series of illuminated glass panels that displays images and text that illustrates the meaning of military service to our community and country in the past, today and in the future.

There are black-and-white panels of the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and a 1916 military parade in Gore Park.

It provides context about the conflicts and peacekeeping missions that Canada has been involved in since the cenotaph went up. The concept, design and photographs were developed by the Veterans' Place focus group made

up of local veterans, current servicemen and servicewomen and historians working with city hall staff.

I share their hope that Veterans' Place in Gore Park will provide the citizens of Hamilton with a space in which to reflect on and remember the past and to hope for the future.

This display has a personal meaning for me. Five members of my family were veterans of World War II—we were lucky they all returned to live out their lives—two of them in the air force and three in the navy.

NATUROPATHIC MEDICINE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It gives me pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge today to recognize Naturopathic Medicine Week, which is this week, May 11 to 17. Across Canada this week, we give acknowledgement and thanks to all the naturopathic doctors who provide us with alternative paths to health.

Naturopathic doctors contribute to well-being across the country by helping patients to invest in preventive measures to ensure general good health. For those of us who do not take the time to care for ourselves on a daily basis, naturopathic doctors can help us learn how to stay healthy and live better lives.

The Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors is focusing this week on educating the public about chronic pain, fatigue and stress. In fact, they held an event last night here in Toronto stressing the importance of managing stress to improve health. That's a lesson I think many of us around Queen's Park would do well to heed.

Recently, I had the opportunity to tour the Farquharson naturopathic clinic in Ayr and to learn about what naturopathic doctors are doing to contribute to good health. As a member of the community of health care providers in Ontario, I was really glad to hear about health promotion through another lens.

I'm happy to acknowledge the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors for promoting health across the province. Speaker, it's a message that I think we would do well to follow.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Rick Nicholls: May is Lyme Disease Awareness Month. The best way to protect against Lyme disease is to prevent tick bites. As we approach a long weekend, it's important to be aware of the threat that tick bites pose.

We know that ticks breed heavily in moist areas where there is long grass, most notably in our parks where people go to enjoy nature with their families. Many are walking unknowingly into a potential health hazard. They enjoy the outdoors and especially in our provincial parks. In the riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, we have Rondeau and Wheatley Provincial Parks, as well as Point Pelee National Park.

Spraying ticks is not possible, as it will harm ecosystems, but cutting back tall grasses next to walk and bike trails inside our parks will, in fact, help alleviate this problem.

The government and legislators must do more to protect Ontarians from Lyme disease.

Individually, people can, in fact, help minimize the risk of tick bites by knowing the areas of the province where ticks are common. You can cover skin and pull socks over pant legs to minimize exposure to ticks and wear light-coloured clothing so it's easier to spot them. It's important to shower or bathe within two hours of being outdoors to wash away loose ticks. Finally, do a full-body check for ticks on yourself, children and pets.

Speaker, together, we—you and I—can keep Ontarians healthy and safe.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today, we have the very special privilege—a group stopped by Queen's Park. I told them:

Remarks in Ojibway.

A group of First Nations people from Treaty 9 Mushkegowuk area are walking from Cochrane to Ottawa to bring awareness to the damage Indian residential schools did to their culture, their families, to individuals and their way of life.

I had the privilege of hosting them in my office. If you might have sensed the distinct scent on the east doors, we had a smudging in my office. Together, we offered a prayer to *[remarks in Ojibway]*.

This group's main objective was to educate Canadians of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Treaty 9 group is dedicating the five-day walk to the missing and dead aboriginal women and will be thinking of them and directing their energy to this issue as they make their way to Ottawa.

1510

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission mandates include finding out the truth about what happened at these schools and then informing Canada.

The commission hopes to guide and encourage First Nations, Inuit, Métis and Canadians in a process of healing. This is to lead to reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

Remarks in Ojibway.

This means we are all helpers walking for Indian residential school survivors for truth and reconciliation.

Remarks in Ojibway.

I wish good luck to my friends on your journey.

Remarks in Ojibway.

See you later, my new friends.

APOLOGY

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I want to formally offer my most sincere apologies for any offence and hurt caused by the language I used in my petition presented last week, Speaker. It was not my intention to use language that would be offensive to anyone. My choice of language did

not reflect the inclusive society that we are all hoping to build.

Additionally, I want to recognize that BlackBerry has been a key player in developing the Waterloo region into a globally renowned information and technology leader. Our government is proud to work with companies like BlackBerry to spur innovation, attract investment and create jobs.

Again, I want to reiterate my apologies to the House and to anyone who took offence to the contents of my petition.

MALLORYTOWN GLASS WORKS

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise on what I'm affectionately calling Mallorytown Day at Queen's Park. I'm thrilled to welcome visitors from my riding to see the Mallorytown Glass Works display on the first floor of the west wing. It's been great over the past several weeks to have this piece of Leeds–Grenville, and some truly significant Canadian history, here to make it feel like home.

Mallorytown Glass Works was Canada's first glassworks and began in 1839 when Amasa Mallory opened the factory in a log structure just outside of Mallorytown. Glassblowers produced a variety of glassware for settlers, including plates, bowls, jars and bottles. In addition to these household items, artisans also produced some stunning pieces of glass artwork. Seven of those artifacts are included in the Queen's Park display.

The factory closed in 1840 and, sadly, almost nothing remains of the building today. However, the site and the national significance of its story has been preserved, thanks to the tireless work of the Thousand Islands River Heritage Society, many of whom are with us today.

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you.

Society members prepared the beautiful information cards that I shared on all MPPs' desks this morning.

I want to thank everyone involved for their efforts to keep this invaluable chapter of our local and national history alive.

And if you're travelling on Highway 401 through eastern Ontario this summer, Speaker, or any of the members, I'm personally inviting you to take the Mallorytown exit. Come and explore this piece of our past and discover all the beauty that Front of Yonge township and the Thousand Islands have to offer.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

Mme Marie-France Lalonde: Aujourd'hui, je tiens à honorer une école à Ottawa qui a tout récemment remporté la première place en termes d'écoles secondaires en Ontario. C'est la première fois que l'école secondaire catholique de formation professionnelle et technique Minto fait partie des 749 écoles évaluées par l'Institut Fraser et, avec un score parfait de 10 sur 10, elle se classe au premier rang provincial. C'est tout un honneur pour cette école, située sur le campus de La Cité, et c'est aussi un beau clin d'oeil pour la communauté francophone.

Depuis que nous avons eu le contrôle de nos propres conseils scolaires en 1992, nos élèves francophones et nos écoles francophones n'ont cessé de progresser pour aujourd'hui faire preuve d'excellence. C'est un long chemin parcouru depuis le règlement 17 de 1912, qui interdisait l'enseignement en français en Ontario. En effet, année après année, nos élèves francophones surpassent les moyennes provinciales dans plusieurs matières.

Notre gouvernement croit en la francophonie et démontre cet engagement grâce à des investissements sérieux et soutenus. Cet investissement dans l'éducation en français, nous l'avons augmenté de 101 % depuis 2003.

C'est donc avec fierté que je reconnais aujourd'hui l'école secondaire catholique de formation professionnelle et technique Minto pour son excellence, et aussi les autres écoles francophones à travers la province pour le beau travail effectué et aussi pour être un si grand allié dans la transmission de notre culture franco-ontarienne à la prochaine génération.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm honoured to stand in the House today to bring awareness to an organization from my wonderful riding of Newmarket–Aurora. This past January, Say My Name Canada began the "March to a Million – Coast to Coast Kindness Campaign," challenging organizations, schools, families and individuals across Canada to make one million acts of kindness. Once this goal is achieved, with participation from every province, they'll send a certificate of achievement to the United Nations and challenge the world to do another million acts of kindness.

The focus of this campaign is to counter the growing problem of bullying in our schools and community by creating a wave of kindness across Canada, with the ultimate goal of ending bullying.

This campaign has sparked an influx of random acts of kindness across York region. Whether it be a student standing up for a classmate or students volunteering in a seniors' home, the positive influence of this campaign is overwhelming.

I want to welcome David Robinson and Glenn Marais to the chamber today and thank them for initiating the campaign, which brings awareness to a very serious issue.

I also want to thank the schools, organizations, families and individuals from York region who have contributed to achieving 103,778 acts of kindness thus far.

Mr. Speaker, I know our government is doing great work on preventing bullying and harassment across the province, but there's always more we can do. Today, I challenge my colleagues to start a "March to a Million Kindness Campaign" in their communities so we can stop bullying, one random act of kindness at a time.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to make sure I correct my record. I didn't introduce the people who are here for the protest by name, but I do have their names. I'd like to welcome Jenni Gates from Lansdowne; Jeannette Kosnaski from Barry's Bay; Jacques Ouellette from Marathon; Ginette Chaumont from Vankleek Hill; Vanessa McClement from Barry's Bay; and Shawn Morrison from Smiths Falls. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not quite a correction of record, but tolerable.

I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO FLAG DAY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE JOUR
DU DRAPEAU DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Baker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to proclaim Ontario Flag Day / Projet de loi 101, Loi proclamant le Jour du drapeau de l'Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: First raised on May 21, 1965, the Ontario flag symbolizes the contributions of Ontarians from across our province, our rich history, diverse heritage, distinct values and shared successes.

This legislation, if passed, would allow us to officially recognize the 50th anniversary of the raising of our flag this year, on May 21, 2015, and would proclaim that May 21 in each year be recognized as Ontario Flag Day.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

SEMAINE NATIONALE
DES SOINS INFIRMIERS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's with great pleasure that I rise during National Nursing Week to acknowledge the immense contribution that nurses make to the health of the people of Ontario, and to thank them for this contribution.

I want to begin by thanking the nurses in this Legislature: the member for Cambridge, the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the member for Welland—those are the nurses that I know—

Mr. Steve Clark: I like nurses.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I beg your pardon?

Mr. Steve Clark: I like nurses.

Interjection: Madeleine Meilleur.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And Madeleine Meilleur, the member from Ottawa–Vanier; that's right. I want to thank all of them, but I want to thank all of their colleagues around the province.

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And to the doctors in the Legislature, I want to say that I know that they know the importance of nurses.

The commitment of nurses to patient care is commendable and it's inspiring. Le dévouement des infirmières et infirmiers envers les soins aux patients est louable et une source d'inspiration.

As our government works to transform our health care system into one that is patient-centred and sustainable, nurses play a valuable role in helping us to provide that coordinated quality care.

I just realized that the member for Nickel Belt—is she not—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: She's at physio. Okay. Sorry. I do not want to miss anyone. Still great.

That valuable role nurses play in helping us to provide that coordinated quality care is so central to our health care system.

Since 2003, we've expanded the total number of nurses employed in Ontario by over 24,000. That includes 3,500 more in 2014—remarkable. We have invested to support nurses at every stage in their career, improving access to continuing education and professional development, and enhancing recruitment and retention.

Just today, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care launched our new plan for home and community care, which will improve and expand service, including 80,000 additional nursing hours to help make it possible for patients with complex care needs to receive care in their homes and in their community—wonderful.

In addition to recognizing the important role that nurses play, our new plan to improve home and community care is good for patients and their caregivers and will help us ensure that people get care when and where they need it.

I look forward to continuing to work with nurses on the critical transformation of our health care system. Je me réjouis à la perspective de continuer de travailler avec le personnel infirmier sur cette transformation essentielle de notre réseau de soins de santé.

We value them as partners in the health care delivery in this province, and we appreciate everything that they do every day for patients across the province. Thank you to the nurses across Ontario for all that they do.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to recognize National Nursing Week, which runs from May 11 to 17. I thank

the Premier for the shout-out for all the nurses in the Legislature. We thank you and I think it's a wonderful addition to our Legislature.

National Nursing Week does coincide with International Nurses Day, which was on May 12. For those not in the nursing community, you will recognize May 12 as Ms. Florence Nightingale's birthday. Ms. Nightingale was widely credited as the founder of modern nursing, a profession that forms the very backbone of our health care system today, and of which I was a privileged member, of course, prior to entering political life. I always say that in my other life, I was a nurse, but you are always a nurse, as my fellow nurses say, and as the Premier has witnessed recently.

This year's theme for National Nursing Week is "Nurses: With You Every Step of the Way." I appreciate the sentiment of that theme and consider it to be particularly relevant given the nature of our health care system today. After all, for many of us, nurses represent our first point of contact with the health care system and serve vital acute-care roles in our hospitals.

More and more, patients that require some form of continuing or extended care can tell you the important roles our nurses play outside of the hospital setting.

With an aging population and growing demand for services, our health care system is expected to be put under increased pressure over the foreseeable future. For this reason, we in the PC caucus have been consistent in our calls for a health care system that is more patient-centric. Health care that is centred on the patient and can be delivered outside of the hospital is not only good for patients, it is more economical.

It is our province's nurses that have consistently demonstrated that they are a valuable and necessary resource to building such a system. There are numerous patients receiving care in their communities that rely on their nurse to not only provide quality care but also valuable guidance and advice on how to navigate what is often a very complex health care system.

Nurses have a wide range of skills and knowledge, and represent a versatile resource which we must engage further if we're to meet the health care challenges of the future.

The idea of nurses being with you every step of the way is not just an abstract ideal. It's a very practical principle that needs to guide the decisions of this government as it determines how best to structure Ontario's health care system. Nurses are a vital resource in building a system that is very cost-effective—yet still able to handle the increased demand in services that we certainly anticipate seeing.

To me, that means working with our nurses to expand the breadth of services they provide. I know that when I met with many of the CCAC nurses, they were saying, "Less bureaucracy. Let us make the decisions. We are the ones with the knowledge base." It's much more time-efficient for them to say, "Yes, this person needs this type of care in their home and now"—so empowering those nurses to lead community-based health care initiatives.

We should be investing more in our nurses. I know that we learned in the news just last month that there would be 250 fewer nurses working. We learned just yesterday that there are not enough nurses in the northern areas of our provinces, leaving communities dangerously underserved. I know that when we travelled up there, as part of the sexual harassment and violence committee, we certainly heard that nurses could use some more tools and deliver more of the health care that is so desperately needed up there. I think we could all work together to make those changes.

This being National Nursing Week, I think it's a time for the government to expand its creativity and give nurses some more abilities to provide front-line care, both in northern Ontario, as I mentioned, but certainly in our communities. It's critical to building our modern health care system. I am hopeful, and I am sure, that the government will continue to recognize the vital role that nurses play in our health system.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my honour to rise today, on behalf of the New Democrats, to recognize nursing week and to recognize the incredible work that Ontario's nurses do for the people of Ontario.

Nurses are the backbone of our health care system. They support patients every step of the way, as they move through our health care system. From the moment they enter care to the time they are discharged, and then onward through their recovery, not only through the hospital system but in community care, in family health teams—all across our health care system—nurses are there. They continue to be one of Ontario's most respected and trusted professions. Of course, they run clinics on their own in many communities in Ontario. Nurses really do pull the weight when it comes to the health care system in this province. It's because Ontario's nurses are professionals who perform their duties with the highest of standards and the most significant amount of excellence we could expect.

They do this challenging work because they actually care about the health of Ontarians. They care about the well-being of the people they care for. For all of this, Speaker, Ontarians are extremely grateful. In fact, you will know that nurses are on the top of the list when Ontarians consider their most cherished, treasured profession; it is nurses.

While I was visiting Health Sciences North in Sudbury for nursing week back in 2012, I was proud to be made an honorary nurse. But I have to say that I've seen the work nurses do and I don't know that I would actually be a very good nurse. Even a sore finger is something I have a hard time with.

It happened to be the same year that my niece graduated from nursing school at McMaster, and I'm proud to say that she is a very skilled and professional nurse acting in a hospital, actually, on a particularly difficult ward. She does great work for the people of Hamilton at that hospital.

But the real nurses in Sudbury are facing what they are calling a dire situation because of budget cuts by the government that they've experienced. This is the situation, unfortunately, that faces nurses across our province. We should be honouring our nurses by actually providing them with the resources they need to do their jobs. Instead, we have had the longest unbroken period of real-dollar public hospital cuts in Ontario's history. Instead, we see nurses on a picket line in Welland or being fired in places like Peterborough.

Research clearly shows that more hours of registered nurse care leads to more lives saved and fewer complications for patients. But in 2015, the Ontario Nurses' Association has seen more than 400 positions cut. This is the equivalent of close to 800,000 hours of quality RN care.

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Just today, ONA reported that more than 50 registered nurses' positions are being cut from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, CHEO, in Ottawa. ONA knows that another consecutive year of funding freezes will mean that even more registered nurses will be cut, which will, in their words, leave hospital patients in Ontario "at an increased risk of complications and even death."

According to the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, health care is "approaching a crisis situation ... and nurses are telling us that much more needs to be done in order to provide patients with the care they truly need."

Speaker, I was in a round-table discussion prior to the picket line going up in Welland and was shocked to hear nurses describe their experience at work as being "epic" in terms of the stress level—epic stress levels. Hospital wards are overcrowded, long-term-care homes are under-resourced, and home care is underfunded.

Nurses in Ontario are suffering. They are suffering from increased workloads, stress burnout, and, according to the RPNAO, "the moral distress associated with watching in frustration as their patients fail to get the level and quality of care they deserve...."

We don't honour our nurses by making it harder for them to do their jobs. We don't honour our nurses by firing RNs and reducing hours of care. We don't honour our nurses by privatizing their positions and denying fair compensation.

We owe our nurses more than empty words. Nurses support patients, clients, residents and families in our communities each and every day. Our nurses are there for people in both the best and worst of times. In return, we have a duty to support our nurses.

New Democrats believe in a public health care system that is world-class, a system that supports the patients of Ontario and our front-line care providers. We are proud to stand with nurses as they strive to provide the best possible health care.

To the nurses across our province: Thank you. Thank you to all of you for doing all the great work you do to make sure Ontarians are healthy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Steve Clark: On behalf of 22,255 Ontarians, I'd like to present this hydro petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Hydro One rates continue to rise causing undue hardship for Ontario residents, families and businesses;

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

"By far the major cost associated with our hydro bills is the delivery charge, which is exceeding the price of hydro itself. We demand the removal of all the hidden charges that make up the delivery charge to be replaced with a standard charge, the same for all customers in Ontario that reflects the actual cost of hydroelectric delivery.

"Regulatory charges are inexcusable and need to be removed.

"We demand the immediate removal of the HST on Hydro bills. Why is the Province of Ontario charging HST on what is, and always has been, a necessity?

"We demand the immediate removal of the debt retirement charge for all customers

"The time-of-use smart-metering system is also causing serious problems with everyday life. Faulty meters continue to create overbilling issues for thousands of residents. Instead of resolving these overcharges Hydro One continues to force payment through harassment and threats of disconnection.

"Therefore, we demand the removal of all smart meters to be replaced with analog meters.

"We want to be billed a fair and accurate rate for hydro for all customers and we demand action on this matter immediately!"

I have affixed my signature, and I'm going to send it to the table with page Cailyn. I want to thank these residents of Ontario—

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

New petition.

LGBTQ CONVERSION THERAPY

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

"Whereas Ontario needs greater protections for vulnerable LGBTQ youth;

"Whereas in 2013 the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) removed transgender and gender non-conforming identities from the mental disorders category. Since then, every major professional association in the US and Canada have condemned so-called conversion therapy, some even going as far as to call it abusive;

"Whereas LGBTQ youth face 14 times the risk of suicide compared to their heterosexual peers and 77% of trans respondents in an Ontario-based survey had seriously considered suicide with 45% having already attempted suicide. For LGBTQ youth with strong parental support, their risk for suicide dropped by 93%;

"Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Health currently funds LGBTQ conversion therapy through OHIP;

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

"That the Ministry of Health immediately cease funding all known forms of conversion therapy, and ban the practice for youth under 18."

For all those children who are at risk of dying and for all those who have signed, I add my signature and I give it to Chloe to be delivered to the table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have yet more petitions that have come in today. I especially would like to acknowledge Dr. Lisa Bentley, whose practice is in Mississauga, for continuing to send such petitions as this. It's addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly and entitled "Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water." It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition, and to send it down with page Samantha.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Gila Martow: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Hydro One rates continue to rise causing undue hardship for Ontario residents, families and businesses;

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

"By far the major cost associated with our hydro bills is the delivery charge, which is exceeding the price of hydro itself. We demand the removal of all the hidden charges that make up the delivery charge to be replaced with a standard charge, the same for all customers in Ontario that reflects the actual cost of hydroelectric delivery.

"Regulatory charges are inexcusable and need to be removed.

"We demand the immediate removal of the HST on Hydro bills. Why is the Province of Ontario charging HST on what is, and always has been, a necessity?

"We demand the immediate removal of the debt retirement charge for all customers

"The time-of-use smart-metering system is also causing serious problems with everyday life. Faulty meters continue to create overbilling issues for thousands of residents. Instead of resolving these overcharges Hydro One continues to force payment through harassment and threats of disconnection.

"Therefore, we demand the removal of all smart meters to be replaced with analog meters.

"We want to be billed a fair and accurate rate for hydro for all customers and we demand action on this matter immediately!"

I'm signing my name and giving it to page Thomas.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to save the ODSP Work-Related Benefit.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the $100 ODSP Work-Related Benefit provides a critically important source of funds to people with disabilities on ODSP who work, giving them the ability to pay for much-needed, ongoing work-related expenses such as transportation, clothing, food, personal care and hygiene items, and child care; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services plans to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit as part of a restructuring of OW and ODSP employment benefits, and has said that ongoing work-related expenses will not be covered by its new restructured Employment-Related Benefit; and

"Whereas eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take approximately $36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities on ODSP who work; and

"Whereas a survey conducted by the ODSP Action Coalition between December 2014 and February 2015

shows that 18% of respondents who currently receive the Work-Related Benefit fear having to quit their jobs as a result of the loss of this important source of funds; 12.5% fear having to reduce the amount of money they spend on food, or rely on food banks; and 10% fear losing the ability to travel, due to the cost of transportation; and

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"Whereas people receiving ODSP already struggle to get by, and incomes on ODSP provide them with little or no ability to cover these costs from regular benefits; and

"Whereas undermining employment among ODSP recipients would run directly counter to the ministry's goal of increasing employment and the provincial government's poverty reduction goal of increasing income security;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the provincial government's plan to eliminate the ODSP Work-Related Benefit."

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to put my name on it and give it to page Samantha to bring to the Clerk.

REALTORS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I, too, have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Toronto Real Estate Board, and bring it on behalf of my good friend Roger Kilgour and his wife Ruth Hamilton, who recently, as realtors, helped me buy a house in Beaches–East York.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario real estate salespeople are prevented by the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 from incorporating their businesses through a personal real estate corporation; and

"Whereas other regulated professions, including chartered accountants, lawyers, health professionals, social workers, mortgage brokers, insurance agents, architects and engineers, can all form personal corporations; and

"Whereas permitting real estate salespeople to incorporate would create jobs and increase government revenue;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Tax Fairness for Realtors Act, 2015 and give real estate professionals in Ontario the ability to form personal real estate corporations."

I sign my name and leave this with Ethan.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Michael Harris: I also have a petition, put together by students at Waterloo-Oxford school in my riding. I'd like to thank Michael Whitehead for taking the initiative to do so. Also, the co-president of Waterloo-Oxford students' council, Nikolas Kuttis, affixed his name to this.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the secondary students of Durham and Sudbury are not in school because their teachers are on strike; and

"Whereas negotiations with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation are still ongoing; and

"Whereas students of the Waterloo Region District School Board would find it difficult to return to class and work effectively if there is an extended strike potentially impacting summer employment and other plans; and

"Whereas Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School is not semester-based, but one full-year term, students are concerned they could lose all of their credits from this school year; and

"Whereas grade 12 students in particular are most concerned that with the loss of all of their credits this year, a strike could impact their ability to move on to post-secondary school; and

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

"To continue and complete, at the earliest possible time, negotiations with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation so secondary students across the board do not have to worry about their academic futures being compromised by a strike."

Speaker, I also will sign this petition, thank those who submitted it to me and send it down to the table with Megan.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mme France Gélinas: I figure, with Nursing Week and all, that I would read this petition into the record.

"Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major direct care cuts, including: the closure of beds on the surgical unit, cuts to vital patient support services including hospital cleaning, and more than 87,000 nursing and direct patient care hours per year to be cut from departments across the hospital, including in-patient psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical units, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care and the emergency department; and

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

"Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are dramatically cut and will reduce levels of care all across our hospital;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(1) Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect the beds and services;" as well as

"(2) Improve overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

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

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: Mr. Speaker, I may be the only one on our side today; I don't know.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which will make the member opposite quite happy.

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto ... and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school ... in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and ...

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools, and yet, not a single French secondary school has opened in east Toronto; and ...

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education and that the various components of our education system should be aligned to serve the needs of students; ...

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

"That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school ... in the community ... so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live."

I agree with this petition, I sign my name and leave it with page Ryan.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition here for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been over a decade since regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act has been updated to recognize new classes of off-road vehicles and a motion to do so passed on November 7, 2013, with unanimous support of the provincial Legislature;

"Whereas owners of two-up ATVs and side-by-side UTVs deserve clarity in knowing which roadways and trails are legal for use of these off-road vehicles; and

"Whereas owners should be able to legally use their vehicles to access woodlots, trails and hunting and fishing destinations;

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

"That private member's Bill 58, which seeks to update the Highway Traffic Act to include new classes of all-terrain and utility task vehicles, receive swift passage through the Legislature."

I support this petition, affix my name and send it down with Carina.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Mantha: In honour of nursing week, it's with great concern that I read this one.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sault Area Hospital is facing major direct care cuts, including: the closure of acute care beds and cuts to more than 59,000 nursing and direct patient care hours per year from departments across the hospital, including the operating room, the intensive care unit, oncology, surgical, hemodialysis, infection control as well as patient care coordinators, personal support workers and others;

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

"Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are dramatically cut and will reduce levels of care all across our hospital;

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

"(1) Stop the proposed cuts to the Sault Area Hospital and protect the beds and services;

"(2) Improve overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Colton to bring it to the Clerks' table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

OPPOSITION DAY

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS
PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario must abandon its plan to privatize Hydro One and maintain public ownership in this strategic asset to avoid losing annual hydro revenues used to fund education, health care and other vital services; to avoid hydro rate increases related to privatization; and to retain public control over Ontario's energy future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm very pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario NDP caucus to speak on this motion on the floor today.

First, I'd like to recognize that there are many people who were out on the lawns today. We have some visitors in the gallery who are here to tell this Legislature, to tell the Liberal government, that they are fed up with soaring

electricity rates in this province. They are tired of having to worry about keeping their lights on.

1550

Many of these folks who were on the lawns today travelled long distances to be here. It's important that we recognize that and that we thank them for adding their voices to the tens of thousands who are trying to send this government a message.

I know there are some still here. I recognize that up in the gallery we have a number of people from the Canadian Union of Public Employees, particularly the Ontario president, Fred Hahn, who has been with us on this fight from day one. Welcome, and thank you all for being here.

The motion that we have put before this House is a pretty simple motion, really. But it is also a very, very critical one. It's very important for the long-term economic health of our province and it's important to the people of this province. The motion reflects a message that I have frankly been hearing loudly and clearly from all corners of our province, from seniors, from businesses, from industry, from agriculture, from moms, from dads, from youth, from people of every walk of life and every part of this province: This Premier and her Liberal government must abandon their plan to privatize Hydro One.

Hydro One is a public asset and it belongs in public hands. The decision to sell Ontario's electricity system is a short-sighted decision. It has no public support and it is the wrong thing to do for this province. You know, Ontarians don't want to pay the price for yet another bad decision by this Liberal government. They want the Premier to stop her privatization scheme before it's too late.

People in Nova Scotia know the impacts of privatizing an electricity system. They know what privatized power means. Their bills, in fact, rival Ontario's bills for being the highest bills in the country.

Meanwhile, people in provinces like Manitoba and Quebec with their public systems are actually paying half the price or less than what we are paying here in Ontario. Between taxes, hydro dividends and investment, Quebec and Manitoba receive a substantial yearly return from their public hydro systems, as does Ontario. Ontario reaps benefits from having a public hydro system.

In fact, a report that was just recently released—it was commissioned by CUPE—was the Peters report. It shows that selling a 60% stake will cause a net annual loss of $338.8 million. An annual loss of almost half a billion dollars, really, is what it comes down to. And for what? A misguided, one-time cash grab for Kathleen Wynne.

Tens of thousands of people across this province are calling on the Premier to address the unaffordable cost of hydro. Instead, what is her government doing? Instead, her government is embarking on a reckless scheme to privatize this system.

To make it worse, they are plowing ahead. They are ramming this through the Legislature. They're shutting down debate. They're avoiding consultation. They're ignoring the people of Ontario who actually own Hydro One. And all the while, they're spinning false rhetoric.

The Premier talks about leveraging our assets. What utter nonsense. Leveraging a public asset doesn't mean selling it off to the private sector so that we can no longer control it. It means being able to use our hydro system in the public's interest. Leveraging an asset was using Ontario Hydro, for example, to save the town of Kapuskasing from the closure of their largest mill. Leveraging an asset is how we are going to electrify First Nations communities that are currently on diesel generation, even though it's very, very costly to do so. You don't leverage an asset by selling it off for a pittance.

Hydro One's annual report says clearly that its business interests, as an organization, are often in conflict with the public interest. Well, which interest do you think is going to prevail when Hydro One becomes a private corporation? It's not going to be the public interest that's going to prevail. It's going to be the private interest that's going to prevail.

The only way we maintain an electricity system that actually serves the public interest, that serves Ontarians' interest, is by keeping Hydro One public.

While wages are stagnating for most people in this province, and seniors and people on fixed incomes have seen their take-home pay decline, what's happening with hydro? Rates are going up. In fact, rates have tripled. Why is that the case? Because people are paying the price for Liberal mistakes in the hydro system.

Two weeks ago, I was at a beautiful co-op in the city of Kingston. People there told me that their neighbours in this co-op could only afford to heat one room of their home this past winter. With this particular family in this co-op, every other room was cold, and they lived in one room of their house for the entire winter because that's all they could afford to heat. These folks literally camped out in one room. There's something terribly wrong here.

These are everyday families, middle-class Ontarians, who cannot afford to heat their homes.

This weekend, we held a town hall in Brantford. At that event, there was a bakery owner, a woman named Laura, who owns her own business. She was telling us that she has to struggle already to be able to afford to pay the bills. Let's face it, hydro is necessary for a bakery. There are hot ovens going day in and day out in a bakery. As well, air conditioning has to be utilized in the summer to try to give her staff some semblance of an ability to survive through a hot summer in a bakery. She told us clearly at that meeting that if the hydro rates continue to go out of control the way the Liberals have been allowing so far, and the way they're going to increase significantly with the privatization, she's going to have to start laying off staff. She's not going to be able to keep people working at her bakery because she can't pay the utility costs.

There was a woman named Kim at that town hall meeting. Kim was literally in tears—not tears of self-pity. She and her husband are having a very difficult time. He's severely disabled. He's on ODSP. He's having a tough time. They are living on a very low income. She was in tears—not out of pity, though; out of anger and

frustration against a government that refuses to listen to the struggles that the people of Ontario are facing. Kim knows that if the government goes ahead with their wrong-headed plan, she and her husband will likely be living on the streets in the future.

Speaker, unfortunately, no matter how many of these stories I hear, the Premier refuses to listen. She refuses to listen to any of them. Instead, she's restricting the number of hearings that the Liberals are allowing for this misguided budget.

People outside of Toronto won't get to provide any input into the privatization of hydro and how it's going to hurt them. In fact, the sign-up list for the people to be able to participate in those public hearings just opened a couple of hours ago. Two or three hours ago, the list was opened. Already, 286 people have signed up to tell the Liberals what they think, and that's just here in Toronto over the last couple of hours. They have until 4:30 tomorrow afternoon to sign up for the hearings. That's how open and transparent the government of Ontario under Kathleen Wynne's Liberals is here in Ontario.

They are so dead set on ramming through this legislation that they wouldn't even let MPPs debate this process here in the Legislature yesterday. The Liberals rang bells on the opposition, to shut down opposition voices in the process of ramming this bill through. Do you know what? The Liberal government would rather play cynical political games than actually hear the concerns of the people of this province. This government will do anything to avoid any real public accountability and real public scrutiny of this privatization scheme. This arrogant government is showing a complete and utter lack of respect not just for the parliamentary process and the MPPs who sit in this chamber, but for all Ontarians. Once again, it proves just how out of touch the Liberals are with the people of this province.

This Premier doesn't want to hear what Ontarians have to say, but New Democrats do. New Democrats want to hear what the people of Ontario have to say, so let's hear from some of the people. Here's just a sample of some of the messages that I have received. Michael from Toronto says, "I'm writing to express my strong disapproval for (the government's) plan to sell Hydro One."

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Lily, a mother of two, wrote, "I am against selling off something that is a necessity for generations to come."

Randy from Matheson says, "I must voice my utter and complete objection to any potential sell-off of Hydro One."

Victor from Hamilton rightly points out that "these sell-offs ... leave Ontarians poorer in the short and long run!"

Julia from Nestleton Station says, "I am appalled that Premier Wynne threatens to sell Hydro One."

Jan worries that privatization "will kill ... small businesses like mine."

Jim from Milton says, "It is a sad day for Ontario, and we will be paying the price."

Lloyd from Hamilton says, "Please don't off-load this essential service."

Dale from Brampton points out that "we all know that it will end in disaster."

Leanne from Belle River thinks that this is "the biggest short-sighted decision I've ever heard."

Ishwar from Toronto believes, as we do, that "hydro should be owned and operated by the 'people' of Ontario."

And on and on and on.

People are worried, they are scared and they are angry. But not just families; I've heard from representatives from the auto sector, who have talked about how concerned manufacturers are about this scheme. Rate increases will even further reduce our competitiveness as a province. And we know that we have big problems there already because of the way the Liberals have managed Ontario.

If the government moves ahead with this wrongheaded decision, there will be dire consequences on every front, particularly, though, in rural and northern Ontario. We know that those kinds of communities, particularly in the north, have very long, very cold winters. We know that some of them are still in an untenable situation where they are heating with electricity. Those folks are paying $20,000 a year on their household electricity bills. They're not going to be able to afford the 70% increase or so that's going to be likely with this wrongheaded move that the Liberals are bringing in.

The government-side MPPs need to actually ask themselves what they're going to say to their constituents when their constituents ask them, "Why was there no consultation on this? Why didn't you tell us when you ran for election that you were actually running on a plan to privatize Hydro One? Why were the New Democrats talking about all the problems in the budget and the platform but Liberals denied it all?" And yet it was all there; they didn't talk about it once when it came to the actual privatization of hydro. They talked about silly things like opening up ownership, maximizing the assets and leveraging this—that kind of double-talk, if you want to call it that, doublespeak. But not once were they open and transparent and up front and straightforward with the people in their ridings, in those Liberal ridings.

Those Liberal members—not a single one of them was true to the people who actually voted for them on the ballot, because they did not tell them during the election campaign that they were actually going to privatize their Hydro One system. And now they're saying, "It's too late. You bought a bill of goods. You voted for us, but ha ha, you got fooled. Now we're going to privatize hydro, and we don't even care what you have to say about it. We're shutting down the consultation. We're making sure you never have a say. You didn't have a say during the election because we didn't tell you, and you don't have a say now because we're shutting down the hearings." So let's hope those MPPs are proud of the work they've done.

Let me tell you, Speaker, Ontario—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Pursuant to standing order 23(h), that particular part of the member's dialogue does represent the imputing of motive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): In my humble opinion, it's certainly borderline. I don't think she's gone over the line yet, but she will take care where she's going.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians will remember. This Liberal government needs to listen to the people of Ontario. This Premier needs to listen to the people of Ontario. The members opposite need to listen to the people of Ontario—listen to their own constituents, for goodness' sakes. Stand up for the people of Ontario. Make sure that you represent them. They oppose the sale of Hydro One. That's what I'm hearing everywhere I go, and I'm sure they're hearing it, too. So do what you were elected to do: Represent the people in your ridings and stop the sale of Hydro One. It is the wrong thing to do. Everyone in this House—everyone in this House—should support affordable public power in Ontario and pass this motion today.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. You may sit down now, thank you.

Further debate?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join this debate. Thanks to the leader of the third party for the motion that she's placed on the floor today. I think it's probably brought forward in a constructive way, and it certainly expresses very strongly, the opinions of that party as to what the future of Hydro One should be.

Certainly I think, when we look at the history of Ontario, the provision of power to the industry in this province and to the people in this province, we live in a climate, we live in a country, we live in a province where the reliance on a reliable system of electricity generation and distribution is something that is very, very important to the people in the province of Ontario. It's something that I think governments in the past have treated sometimes with the seriousness it deserves and sometimes in, my opinion, simply haven't placed the highest priority on it or sometimes haven't given it the attention that it deserves.

In this case, Speaker, a proposal is being brought forward into this House that there should be a change, in the government's opinion, to how Hydro One is constructed and to the way it does business.

In the past—the speaker is absolutely right—it served the people of Ontario; I think sometimes it served the people of Ontario very, very well. Hydro One, in some respects, has a very good reputation. In other respects, I think, to my constituents and to others around this province and in recent years, perhaps, the reputation hasn't been what it should be.

What we did in the last election, Speaker, is, we went out and we each presented our platforms to the people of Ontario. And I think two of us at least—ourselves and the third party—suggested that we would take a look at things and we'd take a look at them with a different view. Basically, that we'd examine what we had in the form of public assets, and see if those assets could be used in other ways. The idea behind that is that you go out, you examine the issue and then you proceed on the best advice you have.

I think the speaker herself was very, very sincere when she said, "There's no doubt we did talk in our platform about looking at some of the physical assets that the province owns." I think that's perfectly responsible, Speaker. She goes on to say, "I mean, you can never be closed-minded about that." I think for a political leader in the province of Ontario to say that at that juncture is the right thing to say, Speaker.

What we did is, we went out, we sought advice from people in the business community. We sought advice from the people who work at Hydro One themselves, the Power Workers' Union, and, of course, others around the province offered opinions on this. At the end of the day, the advice that came forward was that we should allow the privatization or the selling off or the IPO—or whatever you want to call it—of about 60% of the company. The feeling was that you still wanted to have control over the organization, but you wanted to attract that private sector discipline and you wanted to build a hybrid model of Hydro One. I don't think there's anything wrong with that.

During periods of my own life, I worked for Mississauga Hydro for a number of years. My father, for example, as a skilled tradesman, helped build some of the Ontario Hydro nuclear plants. So I've had a personal interest and a professional interest in how the hydro system is run in the province of Ontario.

I think what's being brought forward today is an opinion as to—I don't know what. I really don't know what it says, other than, "Don't do what the government's proposing it should do."

I'm suggesting that the advice that the government has received is actually sound advice. It's advice that the people who work right in that company, the Power Workers' Union, also support as well. I think other governments over the years have attempted to engage themselves in the Hydro One issue, and the idea was to build a combination of public sector ownership and private sector discipline into the organization, so that when it did the distribution for people in the province of Ontario, it was doing it in an efficient way but it was also doing it in the best interest of taxpayers, ratepayers and citizens in the province of Ontario.

Some of the safeguards that are being suggested that we should put in place are that 40% of the board of directors will be nominated by Ontario and that a two-thirds board vote will be required for any major decisions that are brought forward to the Hydro One board. We will have the power—the government, this House, this Legislature—to dismiss the board if we so see fit. We will introduce some legislation along with this proposal

that would mean that the government cannot own less than 40% of Hydro One shares.

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I appreciate the opinion of the leader of the third party. I think she put it forward very forcefully and has expressed an opinion. I think, on an issue as major as this, there's going to be a variety of opinions. The one that we've put forward, I think, is the one that will, in the fullness of time and perhaps even today—I haven't seen any polling on it, but there's a variety of polling on it. I think in the fullness of time, people will look back to the decision that was made by this House, by this government, on this proposal and will realize that this was the right way to proceed.

So my thanks to the member for bringing this forward. I happen to respectfully disagree with her opinion. Thank you.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join this debate on behalf of the PC caucus, as their energy critic. You know, there's a little bit of merit in the motion. We won't be supporting it.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Oh, the wheat from the chaff.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, definitely. Definitely.

Let's talk about the folks that were here earlier today, the people who are saddened and frustrated about their hydro bills. They didn't come here to talk about Hydro One. You know why they were here? Because for years now, they've watched their hydro bills go up and up and up, and they want a government that responds to the pain that they're feeling.

The sad part of it is that this government, the Wynne government, has failed to respond. In fact, they refuse to respond to the pain that people are suffering. But they didn't come here because they are concerned about the ownership of Hydro One; they came here because of the price of hydro, the bottom line on their bill, which is constructed by the electricity, the distribution and all of the other add-ons that this government is famous for.

We've taken a position on Hydro One. Our position has been clear that we believe the province should retain majority ownership of Hydro One. The government has decided they're going to sell 60% of Hydro One. It is our position that with majority ownership, we will always maintain the necessary control to protect the people of Ontario.

We have also said that any sale of any shares of Hydro One should be subject to a value-for-money audit by both the accountability officer and the provincial Auditor General. Those are the kinds of protections we want to see in place so that the people of Ontario, if there is a share purchase, a share sale of the assets of any of the entities of the OEFC, will be getting fair value.

We have also made it clear that any of the monies accrued from the sale of any of the shares of Hydro One or any of the electricity entities must go to pay off the electricity debt—

Ms. Catherine Fife: That won't bring down rates.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It must go to pay off the electricity debt. It is the debt that is crippling electricity rates.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't need a lesson from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo about how to run the electricity system. I know my job; I can certainly tell you that.

So let's talk about the NDP now—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Let's talk about the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I don't need any help with my job, who I will say is out of order or who isn't. It's not up to you to chastise the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I'll handle that. Thanks very much.

Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I listened to the NDP out on the lawn today chastising the PCs, and you know why? It just boggles my mind that they can sit there and be so smug when they stood hand in hand, shoulder to shoulder with the Liberals in 2009 with the passage of the Green Energy Act.

The Green Energy Act is the primary piece of legislation that is responsible for the skyrocketing electricity rates we see in Ontario today. It is responsible for the $50 billion that is going to be paid out in global adjustment by the end of this year. It is responsible for the lucrative contracts to Liberal friends to build wind turbines all across this beautiful province—a blight on the land—ones that are inefficient, intermittent and produce power at excessive rates. We pay excessive rates for them to produce the power.

They have not done any of the things with regard to solving the electricity challenges. So within that Green Energy Act is the single greatest ingredient when it comes to escalating hydro rates in the province of Ontario.

The Liberals and the NDP were like a band of brothers. They couldn't vote quickly enough for the Green Energy Act. Over here, my friends in the NDP—yes, they chastise me, and sometimes I may even deserve a little bit. But when it comes to the Green Energy Act, they cannot run and they cannot hide from what they did to the people of Ontario when they supported the Green Energy Act. That is the worst piece of legislation in the history of this province.

George Smitherman got his way. He brought in the Green Energy Act and then he decided, "I'm getting the heck out of here. I'm going to be mayor of Toronto." That didn't work out very well, either, because they figured it out: If he can mess it up so badly in the Legislature, he's probably going to screw it up in Toronto, too.

Let's at least be straight about what we're talking about here today. This is ideology speaking. This has nothing to do with hydro rates; it's ideology. It has nothing to do with the price people pay for hydro.

The NDP is married to the belief that everything has to be publicly owned. How did that work out in Russia? I'm just curious. Let me know when you figure that out.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down.

Here's the deal: The third party is yelling at the member from Renfrew; the member from Renfrew is yelling at them. But nobody is going through the poor Speaker.

From now on, you'll direct your comments through me instead of pointing and yelling at the third party. Thank you so much.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Anyway, Speaker, as I said from the start—I'm looking right at you, Speaker—our party will not be supporting this motion, because it is based purely on ideology. We have made it clear from the start: We want to make sure that any asset that is sold in this province gets a fair value to the people of this province. They own the assets.

It is incumbent upon the government to ensure that any deal that is made is good for the people of Ontario. It is incumbent upon the province to ensure that any of the proceeds from this deal go to pay down the electricity debt. When those things are in place—and we return majority share, so that the biggest shareholder continues to be the people.

If all of those things are in place, I am confident that—if this government changes its tune on the Green Energy Act and the disaster that they're perpetrating on the people of Ontario, with some help, then we'll be okay. Until that day happens, no matter who owns Hydro One, we're in for a lot of trouble.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo now has the floor.

Ms. Catherine Fife: For the love of humanity, Mr. Speaker. It's not ideology when you follow the money, and that's what I'm going to be focused on here today.

Although this government has not been listening to the people—they have not been listening to their constituents; they haven't been listening to experts. There is someone I just want to quote. His name is Bryne Purchase. He's a former chief economist of Ontario, a former Deputy Minister of Finance, a former Deputy Minister of Revenue and a former Deputy Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. This is a qualified insider who understands how government is supposed to work, and he has been very critical of this decision.

He goes on to say—and this was just published yesterday: "How can a major public policy initiative, not even discussed in a general election, opposed by a solid majority of the Ontario public, and that has no strong rationale in basic economics wind up as a virtual fait accompli?

"Impossible in a democracy you say. Yet, that is what has happened with the Wynne government's decision to privatize Hydro One Networks. I would bet even some members of the Liberal caucus and a lot of Liberal voters are shocked by this decision.

"Hydro One Networks is a $15-billion asset and this privatization is basically a one-time decision. As the NDP leader"—the leader of the third party—"says, there is no 'do-over' here. Surely, a decision of this magnitude deserves some special democratic process around it."

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"Yet Kathleen Wynne can jam this through"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You can't use "Kathleen Wynne." "Premier" or "Premier Wynne"—

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Premier can—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Let me finish. "Premier Wynne" will be acceptable.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Premier Wynne "can jam this through, solely because she is the Premier and has a majority government. That's all that matters. By the time" the Premier "can be replaced at the next provincial election, the privatization will be virtually impossible to undo.

"Why do we find ourselves in this situation?" Mr. Purchase goes on to say, "If most people don't want this to happen, then why is it happening?"

Premier Wynne's "government's motivation is simple. It wants the money that Hydro One would have yielded in the next 20 years paid into the treasury in the next three years so that the government can be more assured of meeting its balanced budget target.... This isn't about Ontario's future infrastructure; it's about this Liberal government's current needs."

Bay Street wins in this deal. The Liberals established this "advisory council chaired by former Bay Street" CEO "Ed Clark, to give 'independent' advice on asset value maximization."

Let's also remember that Mr. Clark said this was going to be pro bono, and yet he charged the people of this province $7 million for that work to consulting companies.

Finally, he goes on to say, "The privatization of Hydro One is not about economic efficiency. The Wynne government simply wants the cash infusion now, for its own short-term budgetary agenda, and at the expense of future governments. In this sense, it does show contempt for other legislators....

"Surely in a democracy, we should have the right to an open and honest debate about the disposition of major public assets, followed by a provincial referendum. Anything else shows contempt for the people" of this province.

I'd also like to remind the people who are paying attention to this—this really has caught the people of this province off guard—that this will be the largest transfer of wealth from the people of Ontario, the people of this province, who are currently owners of Hydro One. That transfer of wealth will go to Bay Street, who will become the landlords. And let's be clear: There is no rent control in this relationship.

Mr. Purchase also raises the question around the selling off of Hydro One Brampton to some nearby utilities as "dubious at best. It's just a backroom agreement with no competition or transparency"—this coming from this facade of openness and transparency from the Liberal government.

In any case, this government seems dead set on ramming this through without any sound rationale and no economic plan for actually following through on some of their promises. We saw in the budget bill that they have

not protected the people of this province from collusion; they have not done their due diligence around the finances of this deal. They've talked about broadening ownership and unlocking value. They've said everything except "sell-off," which is what they are doing.

We would love the Financial Accountability Officer to have a look at this deal, but the budget bill removes that oversight. In addition, Ombudsman oversight is removed; Auditor General oversight is removed. There will be no oversight. There will be no accountability in this deal, going forward.

We just heard yesterday—this is incredible—that the Auditor General did a review, a special report on the changes to the Government Advertising Act. She says that the changes in the guidelines about what is partisan and what is not—this government is changing that, very much in keeping with the Stephen Harper theme of this country. She said yesterday that those amendments to the Government Advertising Act make a mockery of her office. So this government is going to be able to put out any Liberal spin they want, and the people of this province are going to have to pay for it. That is just adding insult to injury.

There is very clearly a motive here, which is not in the best interests of the people of this province. I desperately hope, and we are doing our best, as the third party, to make sure that people understand that this is a huge, untenable breach of trust on the part of this government, and we will not let you forget it, going forward.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. I hope your hand is all right.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, 30 years ago, when I moved back to Ontario after spending six years in Western Canada, it used to take me 30 to 45 minutes to get from my Meadowvale office to somewhere around here in downtown Toronto.

Today, my constituency office is only a few hundred metres from that Meadowvale location, and it takes about 90 minutes to get to downtown Toronto, and I know all the shortcuts and all the alternate routes there are.

To compare our municipal and provincial infrastructure to our US counterparts used to be a source of pride for Canadians, especially Ontarians. No longer. Though some states are better than others, Ontario is being surpassed by many cities and states in the United States. In Asia and Europe, we'd be second-rate jurisdictions. Any visitor to Hong Kong, Shanghai, Taipei, Seoul or any world-class Asian city will tell you how infrastructure should look, feel and operate.

Ontario knows how to build roads, water systems, hospitals, schools and transit systems. We build them as well as anybody else. Now we have to grapple with how to pay for the infrastructure that we all share in ownership—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me.

A point of order, the member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I would just ask what the member's comments have to do with the motion under consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think the member's comments are regarding transportation, and I don't feel he has gone astray.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, does this mean—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If you have a problem with my decision—thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, does this mean that Ontarians need to own 100% of every public facility that we use all the time? Nowhere else in the world does the public insist that it needs to own 100% of everything it shares, yet this resolution asks exactly that.

How do we pay for what we need to build new, what we need to renew or repair? We could raise taxes. We could continue to borrow money. We could pay the private sector to build and operate our public infrastructure and services. Or we could find some money to build what we need, in money locked into what we already own.

The leader of the third party likes to compare Ontario to Quebec or Manitoba when she talks about our electricity system. Quebec draws upon a hydroelectric system that was largely built two generations ago. So does Manitoba.

Where has the growth happened in Canada in those past two generations? Have Manitoba and Quebec added more than five million people in those 40 years? Ontario has. Have other comparable jurisdictions had to do the equivalent of building the city of Kingston each and every year for all of those 40 years? In the GTA alone, Ontario has.

Through the recession, what did neighbouring US states do as the economy slumped? They laid off workers by the millions. Ontario didn't.

Ontario borrowed money during that time, a lot of money. Ontario borrowed money because the only option less palatable than borrowing that money was not borrowing it. It meant that Ontario recovered its lost recession jobs fully three years before our US cousins did.

Borrowing money isn't the right way to build the 21st-century infrastructure we need. Neither is taxation. We've worked our way, as a province, into being the most competitive jurisdiction in North America. We shouldn't forsake that competitive advantage as the NDP would do, just as they jacked up taxes in the 1990s.

In some parts of the world, major parts of our public infrastructure are delivered by the private sector. Ontarians don't feel that level of privatization would work in a society in which our geography and our population density dictate what is and isn't possible.

That leaves us to consider whether we should grow the size of our portfolio of public assets if some of the

ownership is shared, and if Ontarians continue to control and regulate how it is owned and how it operates.

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Most small businesses confront a similar problem in discussion with their partners, their advisers and their bankers, who often boil down the question to this: Do you want, as an owner, to own 100% of something smaller, or do you want to share the ownership of something bigger and more profitable with investors?

Ontario has never been a zero-sum game. Ontario is about growing as a people and growing as an economy. So do we need majority ownership or do we need control of the entity that is Hydro One? Clearly it is the latter and not the former.

For the transformation of our electricity system to be 99.7% carbon-emissions-free, for the public transit expansion and renewal that we need to continue to be Canada's engine of growth and North America's destination of choice for foreign investments, let's give our pension funds something to buy in Ontario. Let's share some of what Ontario owns with the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I appreciate yet another opportunity to talk about our skyrocketing hydro rates in Ontario and how we got there.

Quite frankly, I think the NDP motion is missing the real point. We all were on the pre-budget consultations, all three parties, not only this year but last year and every other year, for that matter. We saw it last year and we saw it this year: People throughout Ontario are desperate when it comes to their skyrocketing hydro bills. Whether it was the YMCA in a community or the social planning council, whether it was individuals like Jennifer in Ottawa, who I've talked about 100 times in this Legislature, or whether it was some of our largest industries, the skyrocketing hydro rates, the highest hydro rates in North America, are hurting our families, hurting seniors and hurting businesses.

Last year, we had 2,700 fewer businesses in Ontario than the year before. They're exiting Ontario. Families were lined up out here today talking about how enough is enough with the hydro rates. This is the real crux of it.

As the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke spoke of earlier, it's the Green Energy Act—the flawed, failed Green Energy Act. Incidentally, according to all of the experts—whether it's the Auditors General, both of them, in their 2011 and their 2014 reports, or all of the other organizations, the IESO and all—they tell us there's nothing green about the Green Energy Act.

We started off in 2009 with 25% of our power in Ontario coming from the cleanest, the greenest, the most reliable and—the key—the most affordable energy, water power. Here we are today, $50 billion later, thanks to the global adjustment, the price that's paid, the difference between what we pay to have energy made and what we sell it for—$50 billion was spent. Here we are with 25% of our power in Ontario coming from green energy. Water power is now reduced to around 22% and we've seen wind power come up to 3%. So we're still at 25%. We haven't added one kilowatt of so-called green energy in Ontario more than we had when we started.

I was shocked, actually, this week; our current energy critic—and as a former energy critic and our other former energy critic, we can all three of us tell you that we were shocked to hear the minister say, "There's no more capacity for water power in Ontario. It's over." I'm thinking, "Oh, my gosh. Water power?" There are 2,200 potential water power sites in Ontario; 700 of them appear to be viable.

When talking about clean, green energy, we could talk about nuclear energy as well. In nuclear energy—56% of our power comes from nuclear, one of the cleanest, greenest energies in the world. So this flawed Green Energy Act—former energy minister George Smitherman told us, "Don't worry, it's only going to add 1% a year." Good heavens, Speaker. On the first day of May, the peak energy went up 15% in one day. It's going up another 9.8% or 10%, according to the Liberals, next November 1; it's going up again. And on January 1, they're rolling back the consumer benefit. We're talking about a 35% increase to families, peak energy, in a period of eight months. Oh, but Minister Smitherman? "Don't worry. This great, brilliant plan of ours will only cause energy to go up 1%."

So they put ideology ahead of the needs of the people. They put the needs of the renewables sector over and above the needs of seniors, families and businesses in Ontario. That's what we saw happen in all of Ontario.

So this is the real issue at the core of it: What the heck is happening to skyrocketing energy prices and what are these guys going to do about it? Now, so far, we know what they're going to do about it. They are adding more wind power. You know, back in 2006, the global adjustment was $700 million that year. In 2011, the Auditor General said, "Watch out. This thing called the global adjustment is going to hurt your business." He estimated that global adjustment would hit $8 billion. It was $700 million. He estimated $8 billion by 2014—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Per year.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Per year. And guess what? We hit $7.7 billion. That Auditor General—unlike what the Minister of Energy thinks, that the Auditor General doesn't know anything about either math or energy—was almost bang on in a forecast years later.

That's what we've seen from these guys: skyrocketing energy rates, the highest energy rates in North America, which is hurting our businesses, hurting our families and hurting our seniors.

Thank you for the opportunity.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today in support of our opposition day motion.

As a teacher, I would like to shed a little light on the situation that we find ourselves in. We are on the verge of a new, Liberal-government-induced Dark Age, literal-

ly. Our province is on the brink of a time when families and businesses won't actually be able to afford to keep their lights on.

A bit of a history lesson, if I may: Just more than 100 years ago, Sir Adam Beck fought for public hydro. He was knighted because he championed affordable public power for the people. There's even a bronze statue in his memory not far from here, but perhaps this government is going to melt it down and sell it off to their friends, too, because one-time sell-offs seem to be their new thing.

Back to Sir Adam Beck, Mr. Speaker: There are actually schools named in his honour, schools that soon might not be able to pay for their electricity and, like so many others, might have to close when costs skyrocket and funding evaporates.

I came to this Legislature from a classroom, and I know how squeezed our schools already are. Hydro revenues, by the way, are used to fund education and health care. The Premier of this province and leader of the government of Ontario is actually undertaking to punch the lights out of the middle class and the business community and to make sure that our struggling economy can now look forward to struggling in the dark.

I would be more than happy to connect anyone in this room with my constituents who are still trying to pay bills from two winters ago. We've heard stories about people who are living in one room with one heater. Those are some of my families in Oshawa. This plan is tearing apart our public power and our future. This government is making a mockery of our democratic process. Shame on the Premier and shame on the Liberal caucus that isn't standing up to her and isn't standing up for their constituents.

This is an historic turning point. The government is flipping a switch on opportunity and growth in this province and doggedly clinging to a wrong idea. She's determined to go down with this ship and take all of us along with her. Shame on this government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure today to have an opportunity to respond to the opposition day motion and to speak about our plans to utilize Ontario's assets to build much-needed infrastructure.

As you know, in this budget there's an investment, over 10 years, of $130 billion in infrastructure, and it's crucial that we get the proper goods and people to the places that they need to be efficiently and on time. We need to do this because we need to be able to have an economy that is competitive in the global environment.

Il est important que nous investissions dans le transport en commun et dans le transport. Il est crucial parce que nous obtenons des personnes et des biens à l'endroit où ils doivent être à l'heure. Investir dans l'infrastructure, c'est comment nous allons maintenir et développer notre économie.

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We've got a $31-billion investment in public transit—$16 billion inside the GTHA and $15 billion outside. There are challenges inside my community of Ottawa South and Ottawa with public transit, but coming here two years ago and looking at the public transit challenges that exist here was a real eye-opener for me. I know that many of my colleagues in the Legislature who live close to here struggle every day to get in here to work and it eats up a lot of their day.

These investments that we're talking about here are about improving people's quality of life, but also making sure our economy can function efficiently and fully. While I appreciate the history lesson from the member opposite and her commitment to her position, I want to touch on something that was mentioned a bit earlier.

It is about choices. In 2008-09, when the government of the day had to make a choice about whether to continue to borrow money to make sure that those services that people depend on are there for them, those things that we built up, the government made that decision. They made that decision to make sure that we had jobs in the auto sector. The result of that decision was that we had to continue to borrow money to make sure those things happen, that those services were there.

It's important to remember that we're still doing that, but we have a need over here that's crucial to the functioning of our economy. If we don't, we have to make a choice. If we decide that we're going to delay it, we'll adversely affect our economy. The other solution may be greater taxation. What the government has done in terms of unlocking the value of this asset and putting in the protections that we have around that I believe is a prudent thing to do. I believe it's what we have to do to move forward.

I'd like to thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Hi, Speaker. I rise today on behalf of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Hello, Mr. Bailey. The member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Good afternoon to you, Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the residents of Sarnia–Lambton to oppose this government's continued mismanagement of the Ontario energy system and the never-ending rate increases.

Since 2003, hydro costs have more than tripled under the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal governments. Their very own long-term energy plan calls for a 42% increase in hydro bills over the next five years. Every day in my office I receive emails and phone calls from residents in Sarnia–Lambton—seniors, young families, middle-class families, single mothers, people living on disability support—who have done everything possible to reduce their energy usage, but are still facing unaffordable energy bills because of this government's ensuing, skyrocketing energy rates.

Local charities in Sarnia–Lambton like the Inn of the Good Shepherd, the St. Vincent de Paul Help Centre and the Salvation Army, among others, have been working hard to try and help those families who need assistance with their energy bills, but the demand is now so great because of this government's energy policy that the utility banks are now turning people away. Families are having to choose between heating and eating, Mr. Speaker. I know that's not the first time that term has been used in this chamber.

People in my riding are writing to my office to say that they live in fear of turning on a light or a TV during the day, or their air conditioning, because the cost of energy is out of control. Families are telling me in my office that during this past winter they had to choose between heating and eating.

This government's energy policy is an outright failure and now you are prepared to give away control of a crown asset, Hydro One, which will lead to even higher energy rates and saddle ratepayers with billions more in debt in order to support your high-spending addiction. Even the Liberals' own chairman of that committee, Mr. Clark, couldn't guarantee that energy rates wouldn't go up.

The Liberal government's privatization plan doesn't benefit the people of Ontario. It's a fire sale of public assets to pay for this government's spending daydreams in downtown Toronto.

Hydro rates are too high. All members of this Legislature need to be focusing on how we can lower energy rates and hydro rates. Anything else that's brought up here is factually a distraction.

Mr. Speaker, I call on this government to rip up its half-baked plan to give away control of Hydro One and instead focus on lowering energy rates for the residents of Sarnia–Lambton before another family in this province is thrown into energy poverty by this government's policy.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm pleased to rise and talk on this.

I had the opportunity to go to Fort Erie during the budget hearings, and I can tell you not one person from the Liberal government raised selling Hydro. We want to keep it publicly funded and publicly delivered. When I listen to the PC Party talk about, "Well, we want to keep 50%"—any way you look at it, if you're keeping 50% or you're keeping 40%, you're selling publicly funded Hydro.

You take a look at seniors in the province of Ontario, and what they're going through today. They've got to choose between food, medication or paying their hydro bills. Think about that.

One of the speakers from the Liberal Party talked about manufacturing. Hydro rates are killing manufacturing in my riding. You take a look at Oshawa. They just announced 1,000 jobs. You don't think that had something to do with hydro rates not being competitive in the province of Ontario? And if you sell it, what's going to happen? Those rates are going to go even higher. You're putting those jobs in jeopardy.

Just last week I had the hotel industry—which, by the way, might not be supporters of Wayne Gates as their MPP—but they called me and they said very clearly, "Gatesy, we have 14 million visitors come to Niagara Falls. The rates just went up from eight cents to 16 cents at peak time. What am I supposed to do during the day: shut off the air conditioning, shut the water parks down so the kids can't go in the pool? What are we doing in the province of Ontario when we're selling Hydro?"

I challenge any Liberal on that side to tell me that residents in your communities aren't coming to you and saying, "Don't sell Hydro, I can't afford to pay my hydro bill." There isn't anybody who can tell me that that's not happening in your ridings. Everywhere I go, it doesn't matter if it's a grocery store, it doesn't matter if I'm going to a hockey game, an IceDogs game—and this week I may go down and watch the Generals play—everybody is coming up to me and saying, "Gatesy, you've got to stop the sale of Hydro. We cannot afford it any longer. We must stop the sale of Hydro, and we can't wait three years to do it. We have to do it today." Come to your senses and stop.

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

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak of our plan to utilize the value of some of Ontario's assets to help us fund essential infrastructure projects.

No economy, no government, can generate growth without investing in infrastructure. Our government understands this need to invest in infrastructure, and is therefore doing what is necessary to ensure the long-term growth and stability of an economy that benefits us all.

Our government is making the single largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history—$130 billion over 10 years—to renew and expand public infrastructure. Infrastructure like new roads, bridges and transit that will link communities and move goods and people around this province faster and more efficiently. The competitiveness and success of Ontario's businesses depend on this network. Everyone knows, Mr. Speaker, that congestion and pollution cost the economy billions of dollars directly and indirectly.

Infrastructure, like an education system, inspires leading-edge research and sets the stage for our future economic success and long-term sustainability.

Our government remains committed to significant, strategic investments in our schools, roads, bridges, transit and transportation, universities, colleges and research facilities to foster a well-educated workforce, to build research and innovation capacity and to create job growth.

Critical infrastructure must respond to demographic changes, not just now, but also in the coming years and generations.

Our government's investments in health infrastructure will support the goal of delivering good care when and

where people need it, and protecting the health system for future generations.

Infrastructure investments help support sustainable water systems, protect our landscapes and our environment.

Investments in tourism and cultural infrastructure and investments in social infrastructure help ensure all Ontarians have the resources and tools to achieve a better quality of life and to take part more fully in society.

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Our government's $130-billion infrastructure plan has been widely applauded as being bold in its vision, but it will be measured and pragmatic in its implementation. That measured approach includes maximizing our assets so that we can build this badly needed infrastructure. Indeed, this was a part of the 2014 Liberal Party platform. The people of Ontario voted on our budget.

Now, I understand that the opposition's and the third party's role is to criticize and frame matters of the day in terms of their own priorities and in ways consistent with their own ideology.

In summary, our government has been clear about broadening the ownership of Hydro One to create lasting benefits for all Ontarians while at the same time being vigilant in protecting ratepayers.

Our government will retain considerable control over the management of the utility's finances. We will remain the largest shareholder, with a 40% share, and no other shareholder will own more than 10%. We will nominate 40% of the board of directors, and we will have the power to dismiss the board. All of Hydro One's board are required to live in Ontario, with the grid control and head office remaining in Ontario. Hydro One will not have the power to set the rates. That will continue to be the responsibility of the independent Ontario Energy Board.

As MPPs, we are all here to represent the best interests of our constituents. I submit that our government's long-term infrastructure plan, utilizing, as it does, the release of certain provincial assets, will provide the critical infrastructure that Ontarians will benefit from for generations to come.

Now, just in case you missed it, Mr. Speaker, it was the member for Hamilton Centre herself who had the same plan in her platform during the last election. She even said in an interview on May 7—less than a week ago—on Newstalk1010 that "there's no doubt we did talk in our platform about looking at some of the physical assets that the province owns. I mean, you can never be closed-minded about that."

So the leader of the third party recognizes the value of unlocking government assets such as Hydro One. I'm also quite sure that the leader of the third party does not object that, just in the Hamilton region alone, we will invest $13.5 billion over 10 years and increase weekly GO rail trips from 1,500 to 6,000.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Have we all got it out of our systems now, all the yelling and pointing? The member from Kitchener–Waterloo is on a roll.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, well, we'll cut it back, won't we? Thanks so much.

Continue.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Furthermore, unlocking the value of assets allows for this unprecedented investment in other types of infrastructure across the province—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Hamilton Mountain and the member from Oshawa.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: —and I know that the constituents of Hamilton Centre do not object.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd say thank you, but I'm not sure. Thanks so much.

Further debate? The member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: And now for something a little different.

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

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: No, I'm not.

The fact is, of course, that the NDP have brought forward this opposition day motion today: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario must abandon its plan to privatize Hydro One and maintain public ownership in this strategic asset to avoid losing annual hydro revenues used to fund education, health care and other vital services; to avoid hydro rate increases related to privatization; and to retain public control over Ontario's energy future."

Mr. Speaker, as you've heard, our caucus is not going to be voting for this motion today. We have, obviously, a different take on this issue. But we do also stand in opposition to the government's energy policies, going back to the Green Energy Act.

In fact, I had the privilege of being the first speaker from our caucus on the Green Energy Act bill when it was first introduced in the Ontario Legislature back in February 2009.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The third party whip.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Even though we had very little time to review it, it would seem strange that the Minister of Energy of the day didn't even offer the opposition an opportunity for a briefing on the bill before it was called for second reading, and I think it was called for second reading literally two days after it was first introduced in this House. We had very little opportunity to review it, but certainly we raised concerns during question period.

At the time, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was our energy critic, as he is today, and he raised concerns, but I had the chance to speak first for our caucus and I said, "We believe hydro bills will go up dramatically under this approach"—in other words, the Green Energy Act. I quoted our party's critic, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, as he said in the House the day before—that would have been the Febru-

ary 24, 2009—that "hydro bills for Ontario customers are likely to skyrocket." At that time, he said, "as much as 30%."

At the same time, the Minister of Energy of the day was saying that he estimated that hydro bills would go up about 1% a year because of the Green Energy Act. What a bunch of baloney. The fact is, that particular minister is no longer here to answer for his policies, but many of his colleagues who sat in the House in those days—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It appears the member from Kitchener–Waterloo—you know, I'm looking for a replacement right now. Would you like to come up here and take my place for a couple of minutes? Thanks so much. Enjoy.

No, you usually bow before you sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Okay. Yes, it's fine.

Mr. Ted Arnott: My speeches don't normally provoke that sort of a reaction. But it is wonderful to have someone in the chair to listen to my comments on this particular opposition day motion.

My colleague the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke led off our debate this afternoon and he said that our caucus's position is this: We need to retain majority ownership of Hydro One. We need to have a value-for-money audit to ensure that whatever is done is in the best interest of the taxpayer. We need to involve the Financial Accountability Officer as well as the Auditor General in that. And whatever money is generated should go to pay off the electricity debt in the province of Ontario.

As you know, Madam Speaker, the Liberal government announced this year that they intend to sell controlling interest in Hydro One. By selling 60% of Ontario's hydro shares, they anticipate that the proceeds of the sale will be approximately $9 billion. They have said that they plan to restrict any single shareholder from owning more than 10% of Hydro One so that the government will remain the largest single shareholder. They say, of course, that they'll control rates through the Ontario Energy Board. That is their position.

Our caucus has raised concerns about this plan in the House many, many times. The government claims they will use a large portion of the money to fund infrastructure projects, but based on their track record we don't believe them.

It's my understanding that Hydro's debt currently is approximately $27 billion. You would think that a responsible government would begin paying off that debt before allocating the proceeds of the sale to other uses. However, this government is even changing the law in the budget bill so that they don't have to use all of the proceeds to pay down Hydro One's debt.

Our interim leader, when he was Minister of Energy, built into the Electricity Act a provision that would have required any proceeds of the sale of Hydro One to pay down the debt. We believe that is the responsible policy. The government rejects that idea and wants to use that money for other uses. Unfortunately, it hasn't even made a firm commitment to put the money in a dedicated fund for infrastructure, even though they say that they will put the money into infrastructure.

This Liberal government appears intent on selling off Hydro One because they need the money after years of overspending, waste and mismanagement. This year, Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One generated over $1 billion in profits which were turned over to the provincial government to fund programs. Should they continue down this path in selling controlling interest in Hydro One, much of that revenue stream will no longer be available to the government in future years, and this is something the government isn't acknowledging.

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The government also needs to answer questions about what impact this will have on electricity rates, moving forward. As a result, the price of electricity in the province of Ontario has skyrocketed. Of course, on May 1, just a few days ago, we saw an increase of 15% in the peak power rate. It's my understanding that it's now 16.1 cents a kilowatt hour. When they first took office, the price of hydro was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. It has skyrocketed under their policies and under their approach, and as we all know, all of us as MPPs constantly receive expressions of concern from constituents who are afraid to open their hydro bills, who believe that the price of hydro has become exorbitantly expensive. And they're absolutely right.

Under the Liberals' watch, Ontario has become one of the highest-cost jurisdictions for electricity. Not only has this had a negative impact on Ontario families—in particular, our seniors and low-income residents—but it has also made it increasingly difficult for Ontario businesses to compete. As you know, Madam Speaker, as the price of hydro has skyrocketed, we have lost coincidentally with that about 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

There was a time when the province of Ontario sold Ontario as a preferred location for manufacturing investment, based on the fact that we had inexpensive hydro rates, and it was very successful. Through the years—through the 1940s and 1950s and 1960s—Ontario became a manufacturing mecca in the world, largely because of our competitive energy rates and, of course, many other factors. But the fact is that energy rates were one of the prime selling points we used. Now we've lost that competitive advantage, and at the same time we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs.

Our PC caucus will be carefully monitoring and scrutinizing the sale of any hydro assets, to ensure that this government is held to account.

Again, Madam Speaker, I thank you for listening to me this afternoon. I hope your replacement comes back soon, to allow you to resume your seat, where you might want to sit. The fact is that this government has undertaken energy policies that have not been in the public interest, and have put considerable upward pressure on hydro rates and bills. They need to be held to account for their actions, and that's what we do today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The Chair recognizes the member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Madam Chair. I must say how nice it is to see a woman in the Speaker's chair.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to talk about some of the points that came up from the government side earlier in debate. They talked about the government knowing how to build roads and schools. The member from Kingston and the Islands talked about how they're committed to strategic investment in schools. Then they went on to talk about unlocking assets.

I'd like to talk about their commitment to our education system. They know how to build roads and schools. They also know how to close schools: 88 schools have been closed. They like to talk about building new schools: one new school. How many schools were closed in order to build that one new school? They've set aside $750 million to consolidate schools, a fund specifically for closing schools.

Interjection: Hmm.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Hmm.

You know, a few years ago the minister herself talked about the importance of not privatizing hydro; the adverse effect that would have on the education system. That hasn't changed. I'm not sure why her opinion has changed, but that hasn't changed.

I can tell you, as a former school board trustee—and the Minister of Education should know this from her time as a trustee—that hydro rates have actually gone up, and the budgets for schools have not kept in line with that. Spin it any way you want: If we privatize hydro, the cost is going to rise, and that's going to be an undue hardship on school boards that already have stretched budgets.

My constituents—my riding specifically is very diverse. We have some who come from higher-waged jobs; we have those who are also low-income. To sell off hydro would adversely affect the people in my riding, and I can guarantee that none of you have come to my riding and spoken to my constituents.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm very excited at the prospect of having the opportunity to speak to the motion today. I suspect that to some members, particularly from the NDP caucus, I'm going to sound like a tiny bit of—I'd say "a broken record," but instead I'll say "repetitive record," because over the last couple of weeks I've had the opportunity—in fact, I think I was in a position last week, quite proudly, to talk about the convenient mythology that emanates consistently, day after day, from members of that particular caucus.

But today, through this motion and some of the debate that they've provided, some of the contribution that they've made to the discussion this afternoon, they've kind of taken it to a new level, which I know for people watching at home is a little bit hard to believe.

I've got to tell you, beyond the convenient mythology that we hear consistently from members of that party—in particular, though, the leader of that party—today it's more about the inconvenient truth. I had the opportunity to hear my colleague from Kingston and the Islands speak so eloquently and bring that truth to this discussion this afternoon, which I know is very difficult for members of that particular party, for that particular caucus, to hear.

Of course, there's been a lot of discussion, both in question period and in debate, about the fact that they feel very uncomfortable with what was in fact contained in their own election platform last year. I don't blame them for feeling uncomfortable. Of course, it was, after all, an 11-page manifesto that was so soundly rejected by the people of Ontario last June 12. So it's understandable that they would be so eager to run away from what was clearly such thin gruel.

But beyond that, when I look over at that caucus and I see people who represent communities from the north, from urban areas in the GTHA, from Hamilton and beyond, I, for the life of me, Speaker, cannot understand why they would not want to stand with this Premier and this government to invest in infrastructure that's so important to the quality of life that the people they represent look forward to having, but also for the kinds of investments and infrastructure that will build a stronger economy and create jobs.

For example, just in the last few weeks, I've had the privilege of announcing that we are going to forward with the $1.6-billion Hurontario-Main LRT. I proudly stood alongside the Premier of Ontario, the most progressive Premier in Ontario history, and the fantastic member from Barrie to announce a $13.5-billion GO regional express rail plan. That will help communities like Oak Ridges–Markham, like Newmarket–Aurora, like Barrie, like so many others, including some—like Brampton and Bramalea—that the members over there represent. For the life of me I can't understand why they wouldn't want to stand with us, why their leader wouldn't want to show leadership, stand with us, stand with our Premier, because we're building up these communities.

In our budget, as we've talked about in the past, we're talking about supporting highway construction and expansion all over the province of Ontario, in the north and in remote communities as well. Again, for the life of me, reading this motion and listening to the consistent contribution they make in debate and during question period and when they talk to media, for the life of me I don't understand—and, more sadly, I would guess that the people they represent do not understand—why you do not want to support communities like Kitchener–Waterloo, communities like Hamilton, communities like Niagara Falls, communities like Algoma–Manitoulin, communities like Bramalea–Gore–Malton, communities like Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and so many others.

Our budget, our plan for infrastructure, specifically—you know the numbers and the people across Ontario know the numbers, because they embraced those numbers last June 12, 2014. When we won a majority government, they gave us the mandate to proceed over the next decade with investing $130 billion in crucial infrastruc-

ture—$31.5 billion for transit, transportation and other critical forms of infrastructure. That's a plan. It's an ambitious plan, but it's a plan that's commensurate with the ambitions of the people of Ontario. It's why we won last June. It's why you lost and you just can't let it go.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You can't even get a light at an intersection. What are you talking about?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll tell you what I can get done. No more across-the-floor stuff. I've had it.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Tell the truth, then.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And I don't need any more from you.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And I don't need any more from you. That's enough.

Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House today. I guess there's a lot of baloney going around today.

When I'm at home, people come up to me and they ask how I do this: "How do you listen to the other side and put up with it?" They talk about the mess hydro's in. Rates have almost tripled since this government took—almost tripled. We're looking at, what, another 42% over five years, and they're bragging? They brag about how much they're saving because it's less than we thought it might be? Obviously, they don't know, because every time they put out another five-year plan, every few months, it's different.

1710

Global adjustment cost $50 billion over the last 10 years. Imagine what you could do with $50 billion. You could have a brand new nuclear site sitting here, paid for.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You could plow the roads in the winter.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, you could probably afford to pay for the plowing in the winter. You talk about the baloney. We sit here—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. The hammer is coming down, folks. The next outburst from those particular two, you'll be named. I'm getting serious now. I've had it.

Continue.

Mr. Jim McDonell: We have a document showing they cut the plows by almost 50%, and they stand there and blame it on the former government. The member from Wellington–Halton Hills talked about baloney. That's what we're talking about here—lots of it.

My seatmate's company—the global adjustment cost for a small company was over $50,000 a month. It was over 60% of the bill. They don't understand what's happening. No wonder people are leaving. Xstrata: 700 jobs. They were very clear: cost of power. It's an input cost we just can't afford.

We listened to the minister this morning talk about the rates increasing last week. He mentioned 4%; it's 15%. I hope it was his math that was wrong. I hope it's just not the story he's giving us. Then he turned around and blamed the blackout on the former government, when his own commission was very clear what the issue was: It with a problem that started down in the States.

We see this, we look at the costs and we wonder why electricity rates have gone crazy. Well, just start doing some of the basic math. You've got the Green Energy Act, $50 billion; you've got the gas plant cancellation, another $1 billion. Who's paying for that? The ratepayers are paying for that. They have no problem making political decisions and passing it on to the ratepayers. But our rates now, our middle-of-the-night rates, are more than the Quebec peak power rates. So in the middle of the night when we're sleeping, our rates are more expensive than Quebec's during their peak times.

You talk about money. It's great to say that you're putting money in infrastructure. You've got almost $65 billion more each year in revenue—not counting hydro, just revenue—on what you're collecting and you still don't have money to put into infrastructure. You're doing things like selling Hydro One because you're out of cash? It's sad, and the province of Ontario just can't afford you any longer.

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

Mme France Gélinas: C'est inconcevable qu'on soit en train de parler de la privatisation de notre système d'électricité. On a besoin de notre système d'électricité comme un outil de développement économique qui va nous permettre, pour tout de suite et pour les générations à venir, d'être maîtres chez nous. Ce qu'on est en train de faire est une erreur qui, une fois qu'on l'a faite, est un aller sans retour. On ne pourra pas changer ça.

Est-ce qu'il y a eu des problèmes avec le système d'électricité? Absolument. J'ai des centaines de gens dans Nickel Belt qui ont des plaintes, mais on était capable d'aller à l'ombudsman. Après la décision, il n'y en aura plus d'ombudsman. Il n'y aura plus de vérificatrice générale. Il n'y aura plus d'accès à l'information comme on avait avant.

C'est un aller sans retour qui est une grave erreur. On doit arrêter ça et le plus tôt sera le mieux.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to follow on the heels of my colleague the Minister of Transportation and his rousing defence of infrastructure expenditures we're making in this province. I keep hearing from the members of the third party, and it's in this motion, that we're not listening to the people of Ontario. I mean, it's as if you have forgotten June 12. It's as if you have forgotten what happened on February 5, because we very—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess the back row there is a little hard-of-hearing—what I said last time.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker.

In the budget that was rejected by the party opposite, forcing the election, we very clearly set out that we were going to review the assets. Let me just read for you, Mr. Speaker, for the record. This is on page xx of the preface, and it says: "Le gouvernement envisagera d'optimiser et de dégager la valeur des biens qu'il détient actuellement, y compris les avoirs immobiliers et les sociétés de la Couronne telles que l'Ontario Power Generation, Hydro One et la Régie des alcools de l'Ontario ... En vendant ses parts dans la société General Motors, le gouvernement peut réinvestir cet argent dans les nouveaux projets d'infrastructure...."

This is so clear—in my French—that what we were saying here—"envisagera" means "we are envisaging." We are envisaging a process where we will review the assets. This is the mandate given to us by the people of Ontario on June 12.

Lo and behold, we engaged Ed Clark—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Last warning, member from Hamilton Mountain. Last warning for the back row. The member from Nickel Belt was stirring it up, too. I've had enough. The next person is going—last warning.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker.

Lo and behold, we engaged Ed Clark and his commission to review this. We did a public consultation through Ed Clark, and in the midst of the public consultation, we had another election, a by-election, in which, once again, the policies of the parties opposite were soundly rejected.

The reality is—and I've been out. I had a town hall meeting just last night in my riding. I went out to a town hall, and about 45 members of my community came out. Except for the five card-carrying members of the NDP who were there from the leader of the opposition's office—aside from those who were directly there as card-carrying members of the NDP, there was tremendous support for the direction that we're taking here. People recognize that we're not in a position to be borrowing the money in order to go forward with this. Because of the very close spread between what we can borrow and the expectations of investors, unlocking value in Hydro One makes tremendous sense. That's why we're moving forward with it. So I heard tremendous support last night at my public meeting.

I would sincerely hope that all members can rally. We should not support this motion because it takes us down an absolutely wrong path.

The people of Ontario have spoken. It's the right thing to do now, and it's the right thing to reject this motion.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege to rise today. Of course, right off the bat, I will say that we will not be supporting this motion.

In the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, we're noted for our agriculture and our fertile land. We grow great cash crops. We also grow great industrial wind turbines. We have over 600 of them there. Of course, with this government and the ludicrous subsidies that they are paying Samsung and other companies down in my riding and throughout this province, to pay for their broken Green Energy Act—it's a huge concern not only of mine but also of the constituents in the riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex.

There is even talk right now that another industrial wind turbine company is going to be wanting to plant industrial wind turbines in and around the Leamington area. I've had discussions with local authorities down there, and I've strongly recommended that they don't agree to such ludicrousness.

As I mentioned before, hydro rates are on the rise. I look back to when I first came into office, back in October 2011, and let's fast-forward to today, and the peak hydro rates have actually increased by 49.1%. You know what? They're not getting lower; they're actually getting higher. To say that the Green Energy Act is a success would be an absolute lie. It is not a success; it is broken.

We take a look at what companies—my colleague had talked about the global adjustment—are actually paying in terms of global adjustment fees. Once again, this government talks about the importance of creating jobs, but in fact, they're saying that out of the one side of their mouth, whereas on the other side of their mouth, they're actually forcing businesses to leave Ontario. When businesses leave Ontario, not only does that hurt the economy, but then, all of a sudden, the unemployment rates skyrocket.

They can talk about all the jobs that they've ever created in the public sector, but I'm looking at private businesses and the jobs that hard-working, unionized, non-unionized employees are losing because companies are closing the doors and leaving Ontario. That is not right; that's disgraceful. This government should be embarrassed by that as well.

1720

The Liberals talk about change, but in fact, what they're really talking about is charge: charging hard-working Ontario taxpayers more and more for their hydro rates. They're charging them more, and that is not right.

You know, it's interesting. We talk about this selling-off of Hydro One. My understanding is that it's a $26-billion debt that Hydro One has, and the law says that if you do sell off any portion of it, what happens is that all that money must then go directly towards paying off that debt.

Well, I'm hearing that the Premier has decided to rewrite some of the laws, and that not all of that—the number I've heard is that $9 billion is not going to go towards paying down that $26-billion debt. In fact, what's going to happen is she'll take $5 billion of that $9 billion, put it towards the debt, but take the other $4 billion and apply it towards her infrastructure promises.

Speaking of promises, and I'm going to finish with this, Speaker, my people down in Leamington, back in 2011, were promised transmission lines to help feed the greenhouse industry down there. A former Minister of Finance, Mr. Dwight Duncan, had said, "We are going to get that done." Well, that was in 2011; this is 2015. I think it's safe to say it's a broken promise, and now the Leamington people are up in arms, because companies are in fact expanding—in Ohio. They are missing out on investment opportunities.

With that, Speaker, I'm just going to close and simply say that this government has got to get their priorities straight. Their priorities are headed in the wrong direction, and they're heading Ontario in the wrong direction. Instead of climbing to the top of the mountain, we're soaring to the very bottom of the valley—and that is not true.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Since this Liberal government refuses to hear the voices across Ontario, I've got to bring the voices forward from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Hillsport and Manitouwadge are saying no to your sale of Hydro One. White River and Hornepayne: No to the sale of Hydro One.

Dubreuilville, Wawa, Chapleau : ils disent non à la vente de l'hydro.

Prince, Goulais River, Gros-Cap, Harmony Beach: No. Searchmont, Aweres, Heyden: No. Echo Bay, Laird: No. Johnson, Tarbutt, Plummer, Bruce Mines, Bruce Station, Wharncliffe: No. Richards Landing, Hilton Beach, Jocelyn: No. Thessalon, Iron Bridge, Blind River, Sprague, Algoma Mills: No. Elliot Lake: No. Spanish, Massey: No. Webbwood, Espanola, Nairn Centre: No.

Are you getting a message here?

Little Current, Kagawong and Mindemoya say no. Gore Bay, Meldrum Bay and Evansville say no. Spring Bay, Silver Water, Tehkummah, Big Lake and Sandfield say no. Manitouwadge and Killarney say no.

Have you consulted with the First Nations? No, you have not. Have you consulted with Hornepayne, Pic Mobert, Missanabie Cree, Michipicoten, Fox Lake, Brunswick House, Thessalon, Batchewana, Garden River, Mississauga, Serpent River, Sagamok, Whitefish River, Aundeck Omni Kaning, M'Chigeeng, Wikwemikong, Sheguiandah, Sheshegwaning, Zhiibaahaasing?

Mr. Speaker, I've been everywhere in my riding and I've heard from everyone, and they are saying no to the sale of Hydro One. Stop your wrong-minded decision.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm standing up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, one of your people was in the way. I couldn't see you. I wonder who.

Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I was going to say, I know it's hard to tell when I'm standing or sitting.

Mr. Speaker, I think it won't come as a big shock to anybody here that I'm hearing from constituents—certainly people all over York region—that they are paying more on their hydro bill than their mortgage for the first time in their life, for the first time in any generation of their family. I don't know what to tell them—and that's what I want to ask the government. I'm sure they're hearing from constituents as well. What do we tell people who are struggling to pay for electricity, when we live in a country with such vast resources, where it was one thing that was taken for granted almost when I was growing up, that Canada has an abundance of fresh water and an abundance of—

Mr. Jim McDonell: Cheap electricity.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I don't like to use the word "cheap"—inexpensive, affordable—I think is the word—electricity.

I have constituents in my riding who have seen family businesses close because it's just not realistic to pay three times the hydro rate that they paid only 10 years ago, and keep the family business running. They're not going to work when they're not making a profit. That's not what businesses do. Actually some of these businesses tried to carry on because they thought, "It can't last forever," that the government was going to solve the "electricity affordability crisis" is how they would term it. They tried to keep these family businesses running for the sake of the employees because the business was only worth what the property was worth at a certain point, and they feel that these employees are almost like their family, but it comes to the point where employers aren't going to keep a business running merely for the sake of the employees.

Mr. Speaker, I appeal to this government to work with this side of the House to find the solutions that are obviously out there and bring back affordable energy to the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise today to talk on this motion. While I'm a little concerned that the motion wording is a little off the mark, I'm nonetheless pleased that we are being given an opportunity to discuss what I think is probably the number one issue in my constituency right now, and that is the high cost of hydro, with no end in sight, quite frankly. We see decision after decision being made at the political level that is directly impacting people's cost of hydro. It doesn't matter if you're a homeowner, it doesn't matter if you're a senior on a fixed income, it doesn't matter if you're a manufacturer or a small business—everyone is being hurt by these policies that are impacting and increasing hydro rates across Ontario.

One constituent contacted me about their personal hydro situation. He received seven separate bills in the month of March, ranging from $2,400 to $3,700. He's on equal billing and has automatic withdrawals. His average bill would normally be about $300 a month. He's been in contact with Hydro One to sort out the situation. But,

honestly, seven bills in one month? Clearly, there are issues.

I heard from another constituent who just can't keep up. As the rates continue to rise, they are not able to have an increase in their income that allows them to continue to pay higher and higher costs. In all the cases my office has heard this year, bills that have gone unpaid are well over $1,000, and the story we continue to hear is that customers are paying what they can, but they simply can't keep up.

One woman, in January, owed Hydro $9,000 and Hydro was asking for a payment of $4,700 by the end of the day or they would put a load limiter on. At the end of the day, she was able to come up with $1,000 and, with my office's help, Hydro was willing to give her another week to pay $3,700—not an easy thing for a family on a fixed income to deal with.

When I became an MPP in 2007, I might get one hydro call a month. I'm getting one or two a day now. The dramatic shift in how much people are being expected to pay and forced into these untenable situations has to stop, and one way to do that is to stop doing these social experiments that are causing the high costs of hydro.

I'll leave it at that because I know many of my colleagues are interested in sharing their stories as well.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to be able to rise and use up the balance of our time today. I wasn't planning on speaking.

I do apologize for my outbreak earlier with the Minister of Transportation. I couldn't believe his speech. It was absolutely unbelievable, in my opinion. We can't even get a light at the intersection of Fairgrounds Road and Highway 12, and he's out there spending billions of dollars on all these projects that will likely never, ever happen.

1730

That's exactly what this is really all about. This is one shell game, as we've said, the whole budget is. It's a bit of a joke. They're spending billions of dollars. They have no idea how they'll finance it. What they're going to do is sell off Hydro One, and they think that that's going to be the be-all and end-all and that will be wonderful. You know what? We've seen 12 years of mismanagement by these people—12 years now.

My son-in-law is in the audience today. He runs a fairly large manufacturing plant. The reality is—he just told me a few minutes ago—that the bills are fluctuating $30,000 a month with hydro. Can you imagine how someone actually operates a business with fluctuations of $30,000 a month?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: How can you plan?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: How can you plan anything?

But you know what? They sit over there as a cabinet pretending they actually know something. What do they do? They're driving jobs out of this province. Gates said it right. Why has General Motors left Ontario? Why has the Camaro plant left? You know why they've left: because of hydro costs. It's absolutely the main reason, and all the other red tape that comes with everything—the crazy things that have happened at the College of Trades and all those nutty things that we've seen for months and months and months, and now 12 years of Liberal mismanagement. This is just one more mess.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You know what? We're not even going to get into the education field, because that's going to be for tomorrow.

But the reality is, Mr. Speaker—you know and I know, and I think even all the members of the opposition here know—that this sale of Hydro One is a disaster. It has been poorly planned. The debate is a joke.

It's almost as bad as Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act. Nothing happened there in debate. Imagine, on Bill 10, what did they do? They time-allocated the clause-by-clause.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes, you got that right.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words.

Again, I apologize to the Minister of Transportation—because he couldn't get that light up at Fairgrounds Road and Highway 12.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to stand and talk to this motion that New Democrats have brought forward today.

It's time that the government listened to what Ontarians are saying. We've been doing so much work on this side of the House. Over 30,000 people have responded online, saying, "Please stop this." My office is constantly inundated from seniors, from families, from businesses saying, "Please stop this." I don't know how it's possible that the government side cannot have these kinds of calls and emails to their offices. It just doesn't make sense.

They need to stop this process. They need to backtrack. Less than 3% from our hydro sale is going to go into transportation—less than 3%. What difference is that going to make? It's a drop in the bucket compared to the actual cost. They found the dollars to move forward on the transit project. Less than 3% is not going to make a difference.

Please stop this and backtrack and do what the people of Ontario are asking you to do. Do not sell off our hydro.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm happy to have the opportunity here to speak in response to the motion that is before us today, the plan to utilize Ontario's assets in a way that creates important value for average Ontarians and helps us fund important infrastructure projects.

I was listening very carefully to the member for Algoma–Manitoulin when he was talking about his communities saying no to this and no to that, community after community. My question to him is: Did his com-

munity say no to the expansion of Highway 11, to the doubling of Highway 11 and all the infrastructure that will be built in the North? I don't know what questions they ask to their citizens if they answer no to every opportunity that this government had to add to the infrastructure budget to help build infrastructure in different communities here in Toronto but also outside of Toronto.

In my community, my constituents are very happy to see that we are investing in light rail. For years, under the previous government, there was very little money provided to municipalities to help them to modernize their infrastructure. I get telephone calls on a regular basis in my riding; they want us to invest in Ontario Hydro because they feel that, yes, Ontario Hydro should remain a public asset, like it's going to be, but in partnership with the private sector.

For me, $130 billion is a historic investment that will be invested in infrastructure in Ontario in the next 10 years. It's good news because investing today is investing in the future.

You go to other countries, especially in Europe, and you see the wonderful infrastructure—the public transit that they have. We should look to them for an example of how to plan and modernize and how to keep the infrastructure, especially the road infrastructure, in good repair—and always modernizing our infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to support the motion that is before us. I'm supporting the very visionary Premier we have. She has appointed a committee to help her to see how we can finance public infrastructure, especially the mass transit that we need. We couldn't borrow money. We could not increase fares. So what is the option that is left? Look at the infrastructure that we already have and see if we can get money out of it to invest in what is very much needed in our communities.

It's a very innovative way to do business. It's a visionary way that our Premier and our Minister of Finance have proposed in the budget. My community does support the massive investment in infrastructure.

With this, Mr. Speaker, I will leave the opportunity for someone else to speak.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I urge everyone in this House to vote for this motion and block the sale of Hydro One. I urge you to vote to block the privatization of the broader hydro system because you have to understand that although Hydro One is the most visible part of what the Liberals are going after, they are demolishing the barriers that protect the local hydros from privatization: Toronto, Ottawa, Guelph, Windsor, Sudbury, Hamilton, London—all on the block.

Speaker, this is the largest privatization seen in this province perhaps in its history, certainly in decades, and it will resonate down through the generations, just as the setting up of the non-profit, publicly owned Ontario Hydro resonated down through the decades, allowing us to build an industrial society in this province. This is a very big deal, and this is a very reckless act on the part of this government.

There are many levels of impact. My colleague from Nickel Belt talked about the loss of those economic development levers that we need to build this province. I'm going to speak first, though, to the impact on price because that people understand on a day-to-day basis.

I talk to my colleagues. My guess is, the other members talk to their constituents. They know that people have just got their nose above the waterline. They are being pressed hard, and this privatization will take that water above their noses. They will be under water.

1740

We don't have to go far to see what the impact of privatization is. We just have to look at Ontario. The Conservatives, under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, set in motion the privatization of our hydro system. They set it in motion. The Liberals campaigned against it, but when they were elected, they continued with the privatization of generation, and we have seen the impact. Look at the rates on your bills. Look at the rates. We have seen a 300% increase since 2002—a big impact, Speaker. You don't have to look far. You don't have to go to Australia or New Zealand—take your pick. You can go look at the bills right here at home.

What has changed since the 1990s is the addition of hundreds of millions of dollars in profit that people have to pay on their hydro bills. TransCanada's annual report at the end of 2014 said that on their Bruce nuclear station, this private company, part owner of Bruce nuclear, got $300 million in profit. They're about a one-third owner. I'm assuming the other two thirds of the owners got similar profits.

The cost that we didn't pay in the 1990s for power is somewhere between 600 million and a billion bucks a year. That matters. Year in, year out, it comes out of your pocket; it comes out of your purse; it comes out of your wallet. This government wants to accelerate that rate of transfer of money from our wallets, our purses, our pockets into the hands of some extraordinarily wealthy corporations.

It is the nature of this reconfigured, commercialized, privatized hydro system that the billions of dollars that are on the table will attract some very sharp operators, who will look to expand that pile of money, who will look to deepen the mining of our wallets, our purses, our pockets.

Speaker, what is being put on the table is a loss of control. The Auditor General will be out of the picture. The ability to look into something like the gas plant scandal will disappear. We've been told by the government, "Well, this new company will have auditors. They will look after things and make sure it's all fine." Some of you may remember the company called Enron that plundered the people of California about 15 years ago. Where did their auditors sit? They sat beside the shredder, Speaker, shredding corporate documents. That's why they were found guilty. This change puts us in a position

of vulnerability unprecedented in the history of this province.

The Ombudsman will be taken out. Yes, the government says, they'll have a company-controlled ombudsman, a glove puppet for the board of directors, not the bulldog that we have now who actually stands up to Hydro One when Hydro One abuses its customers.

People around this chamber have talked to the Ombudsman when they've had difficulty with Hydro One billing—no question. But that will be gone. The ability of the cabinet to talk to the leadership of Hydro One, the management, and say, "Your direction isn't working for this province. It's damaging us"—gone, because that private sector board of directors, the 60% owners, is going to operate in their own interests. So if they're in a hotel in Omaha one weekend, you know, the six big owners getting together, having a chat, saying, "How do we squeeze a little more money out of Ontario?"—we won't be able to stop them. We won't be able to stop them.

The Liberals say that the Ontario Energy Board can control the prices, just like we control insurance rates in Ontario. We can regulate that really well—no sweat. Mr. Singh, you can talk to that.

This privatization damages the infrastructure, the framework, that Ontarians put in place over a century to give us a decent standard of living and prosperity. It is being demolished in a reckless act by this government. It has to be stopped. I call on everyone in this chamber to vote for this motion and block the privatization.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this. I have listened with great attention to the passion with which the member for Toronto–Danforth just spoke, but let me take this moment just to remind the member from Toronto–Danforth that, notwithstanding his passionate criticism, this was what the leader of the third party, the leader of his party, said on May 7. She said this in an interview on Newstalk. This is the leader of the third party: "There's no doubt that we did talk in our platform about looking at some of the physical assets that the province owns." And this is the important part of the quote: "I mean, you can never be closed-minded about that." What is the "that" she's referring to? The rationalization of Ontario's assets so that those assets are maintained, developed and used in the public interest.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think some people weren't here a little while ago when I laid down the final gauntlet. So I would suggest—

Interjection: I was here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm glad you were here.

I suggest that we abide by that, because someone wouldn't want to be thrown out on a motion day.

Continue.

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I remain just dumbstruck, sitting here listening to the member for Toronto–Danforth get all wound up and twisted into knots. He was almost on the verge of having a heart attack, but apparently he hasn't had any discussion with the leader of his party, or he didn't pay any attention to what the leader of his party said on May 7 on Newstalk. Just so you're reminded yet again—perhaps it'll calm down your nervous anxiety and your nervous breakdown—your leader said, "There's no doubt that we did talk in our platform about looking at some of the physical assets that the province owns." The important part of the quote—now listen carefully. I want you to calm down. You were so wound up, I was worried about your health—"I mean, you can never be closed-minded about that."

Now, I urge you to take your leader's advice and do not be closed-minded. Keep an open mind—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Not only are you pointing and yelling, you're not going through me, and you're supposed to go through me. Not only that, you went on for another two minutes when I stood up, because you weren't paying attention and because you weren't looking at me. So, in the future, you go through me, and you don't point and yell at the opposition. Got it?

Hon. David Zimmer: Well, I apologize for pointing at the member of the opposition, Speaker, and I will address my remarks through you to him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And you won't be facetious, either.

Hon. David Zimmer: And I won't be facetious.

I was genuinely concerned about the contradictions in his statement. He's a member of that caucus and he takes a position on the front bench of that caucus which is diametrically opposed to the position of the leader of his party.

Now, that's a party that claims—I suppose they're in politics because they think they can govern the affairs of the province, but I have to wonder why the member opposite from Toronto–Danforth can't seem to get his thinking in line with the leader of his party.

Interjection.

Hon. David Zimmer: Yes.

I think it's probably a good idea now to go through and say exactly what the legislation contemplates.

First of all, all we're doing is we're broadening the ownership of Hydro One to improve its long-term operational performance. We want to unlock billions of dollars in value for investments in major infrastructure projects that will help grow Ontario's economy for years to come.

Now, if you listen and pay attention to that quote and relate it back to what the leader of the third party said on May 7, those two statements are entirely compatible.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's incredible, all right.

Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: People of Ontario, keep hydro public. It's a great asset to our province, has been for 100 years, and should be for the next 100.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's been a great day.

Ms. Horwath has moved that, in the opinion of the House, the government of Ontario must abandon its plan to privatize Hydro One and maintain public ownership in this strategic asset to avoid losing annual hydro revenues used to fund education, health care and other vital services; to avoid hydro rate increases related to privatization; and to retain public control over Ontario's energy future.

Is it the pleasure of the House that this motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats, please.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy
DiNovo, Cheri	Gretzky, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Fife, Catherine	Hatfield, Percy	Tabuns, Peter
Forster, Cindy	Horwath, Andrea	Taylor, Monique
French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	Natyshak, Taras	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Arnott, Ted	Gravelle, Michael	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Hunter, Mitzie	Orazietti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Clark, Steve	Lalonde, Marie-France	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Smith, Todd
Crack, Grant	MacLaren, Jack	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Thompson, Lisa M.
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Vernile, Daiene
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Walker, Bill
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wilson, Jim
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Duguid, Brad	McDonell, Jim	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dunlop, Garfield	McGarry, Kathryn	Yakabuski, John
Fedeli, Victor	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 72.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being past 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1805.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire 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
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Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
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Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
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 Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
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) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
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 Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

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Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
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	
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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
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
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