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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 6 June 2002

Jeudi 6 juin 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 6 June 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 6 juin 2002

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS
EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002
SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'EMPLOI
DES POMPIERS VOLONTAIRES

Mr Arnott moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 30, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 in order to protect the employment of volunteer firefighters / Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie afin de protéger l'emploi des pompiers volontaires.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member has 10 minutes to make his presentation.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I am honoured to begin second reading debate of my private member's bill, Bill 30, Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act.

In much of my riding of Waterloo-Wellington and in many communities across Ontario, citizens rely on volunteer firefighters for emergency response and protection. Be it fires at our homes, farms or businesses, or accidents on our highways, they are often the first on the scene, taking command of the effort of protecting the public and of saving lives.

Their work is about as essential as it gets, and knowing that their work is volunteered and provided in the spirit of giving back to their communities, their contributions have a very special value which is assigned to them by their neighbours and fellow citizens who support them. My bill is intended to protect and support their work and uphold the regard given to our volunteers in Ontario by protecting the right of paid, full-time firefighters to volunteer as firefighters in their home communities.

The fact is, volunteer fire departments in Ontario rely to a great extent on the services offered by paid, full-time firefighters who choose to volunteer where they live. By volunteering, these full-time firefighters, or so-called double-hatters, provide highly valued expertise, skills

and training for fellow volunteers. The double-hatters have the opportunity to share their skills, give back to their communities and be leaders in their communities.

Double-hatters are key contributors to our volunteer fire departments, and it has been brought to my attention that they are facing pressure tactics from their union in some communities. These tactics are aggressive, heavy-handed and aimed at putting an end to the volunteer service provided by these individuals. Bill 30 would protect double-hatters from such tactics by amending the Fire Protection and Prevention Act to ensure that firefighters cannot be disciplined, expelled, lose representation or lose their full-time jobs solely on the basis of their volunteer service. Based on what has been brought to my attention, I can say to my colleagues in this House that the need for this legislation is as clear as the need we have in every community to have the right to volunteer on our own free time.

The need for a law clarifying and upholding the right to volunteer was first brought to my attention by Doug Smith, chief of the Puslinch fire department. I've known Doug for years, and he came to see me in my constituency office on March 18. He was very concerned that the Puslinch fire department would be weakened if the union forced their double-hatters to quit. Members here will also appreciate and understand the fact that the Puslinch fire department is one of the busiest volunteer brigades in the province, because Highway 401 runs through their township, and almost one third of their firefighters are double-hatters.

Chief Doug Smith became a member of a committee of the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario to support and promote legislation that would protect the right to volunteer. We are debating such legislation today, and I want to commend Doug for his leadership and thank him for joining us here in the members' gallery, along with his volunteer firefighter colleagues Dave Thompson, Adam Gall, Jim Richards, Clare Weber from St Jacobs, Bill Burns and Bob Burns. Thank you, all of you, for making this trip to Toronto to support Bill 30 and for all you do to keep our communities safe.

I also heard from township of Woolwich mayor Bill Strauss, who raised this issue with me on March 28 and gave me a municipal alert bulletin from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario or, as we know it, AMO. We were advised by AMO that the International Association of Fire Fighters is exerting pressure on full-time firefighters to stop them from volunteering in their home communities. They indicated that firefighters are being charged and threatened with being charged, and that

expulsion from their union could result in the loss of their jobs. AMO also made it clear that municipalities and their taxpayers cannot afford the cost of losing the service of double-hatters. Recognizing the problem for volunteer fire departments, the council of the township of Guelph-Eramosa passed a resolution stating their concerns and forwarded AMO's alert to me.

When the Legislature resumed sitting in May, I spoke with members of our government caucus about the problem and found that several others shared my concerns. For example, there's a problem in Whitchurch-Stouffville, which will be further addressed by my colleague the MPP for Oak Ridges in his presentation. I also appreciated having the opportunity on a number of occasions to discuss my bill with the Minister of Public Safety and Security, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Deputy Premier.

Based on what has been discussed in Waterloo-Wellington and here at Queen's Park, it is clear to me that this bill is needed sooner rather than later, and I'm glad we're able to debate it today. I want to thank the member for Ottawa-Vanier for making her private member's time available to me by trading our scheduled allotments of time.

To help demonstrate the need for this bill, I was advised in a letter from Chief Doug Smith that nine of his volunteers in Puslinch are double-hatters. He states the issue clearly: "The obvious threat to safety is the withdrawal of the double-hatters from the volunteer service." I say it ought to be clear to all members that losing experienced personnel also means losing the standard of public safety that has been built up over years of hard work and teamwork. Chief Smith also adds that it takes four to five years of experience to become fully competent in delivering worthwhile fire prevention programs.

I also received letters of support for Bill 30 from a number of fire chiefs, including Brent Barnes of the Arthur area fire department, John McDougall of the town of Erin, Clare Weber from St Jacobs, John Ritz of the township of Wilmot, Ron Taves of Baden, Dan Hitchcock of Guelph-Eramosa, Dennis Kaufman of Clifford and Kevin Karley of Maryhill. I've also received letters of support from the councils of the townships of Wellesley and Centre Wellington and from the town of Caledon and the city of Kawartha Lakes.

Since I introduced Bill 30 in the Legislature on May 22, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario has endorsed my bill and has written to every MPP in the House asking them to support the bill, and also sent an alert to municipalities in support of Bill 30. Jim Richards, president of the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, sent a memo to all MPPs asking them to support this bill, stating that countless double-hatters have already resigned in fear of losing their jobs due to this union action.

I've also been contacted by Tim Lee, who lives in the city of Kawartha Lakes and who is a full-time firefighter in Whitby. Tim has been charged by his union for volunteering in Little Britain, where he lives and has

chosen to raise his family. He indicated to me that his local has moved quickly to put him before a trial board and further described the union tactics in the following manner: "No firefighter deserves to go through the harassment, mistreatment, embarrassment and stress that I have been enduring since December 14, 2001, when my local started its campaign of intimidation, threats and mistreatment against me for the 'crime' of serving the community I grew up in and love."

1010

Not everyone supports the principle of enabling full-time firefighters to volunteer. The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has expressed its concerns about this bill. While I had no intention of withdrawing it, I met with their president, Henry Watson, and vice-president, Fred LeBlanc, on May 30 to hear their concerns and discuss my reasons for introducing this legislation. They mentioned that members who volunteer could become exhausted, and that would impact on their performance. To this I say that the kind of person who volunteers will always find a way to contribute in their home community in their own free time and they should be trusted to govern themselves and uphold their commitments.

They also mentioned to me concerns about greater health risks due to increased exposure to harmful agents. There may be some validity to this point, and I suggest that it should be thoroughly studied by the office of the fire marshal. Finally, they say that municipalities face risks by relying too heavily on divided loyalties. But I say that municipalities and individuals who serve their communities can best decide how their expertise and skills should be utilized.

As I close my introductory remarks on this debate, I ask all members to consider the issue as it really is. If you support the right to volunteer and to protect fire departments from heavy-handed tactics, I hope you will support Bill 30. If you want to uphold standards of public safety, then support our volunteer fire departments, which have said that removing double-hatters will weaken their forces. Volunteer fire departments across Ontario have made our safety standards strong over the years, and by supporting Bill 30 today you will support dynamic teams of firefighters who are working to make our public safety standards even stronger for tomorrow. I would appreciate the support of all members for Bill 30.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I'm saddened and honoured and privileged to speak to the bill. I want to start by making a very definitive statement about the position of each of the members in this House. I would say, with respect, that we are talking about the firefighting profession across the board and that we unequivocally support our professional firefighters, our volunteer firefighters and anyone who works in education, prevention and suppression of fire in our communities. I want to make it very clear from the onset that this should not and cannot be a discussion of the value of firefighters across Ontario. The debate should be about this particular bill in its present form.

The form this bill takes starts on two premises. The first is that it's the total responsibility of municipalities to support firefighting in the province of Ontario. That's a fallacy; that's a mistake. Quite frankly, the monies that are obtained by the municipalities are not solely the responsibility of this government. Our party on this side, and Dalton McGuinty, offered an immediate solution to part of this problem by providing the Ontario security fund option that was available to this government, which would have made \$100 million available to the people of Ontario for safety, and \$50 million of that would have been money spent directly on municipalities to provide for the issues that are being brought up by the member opposite in terms of his offer.

I want to make sure that everyone understands that when this offer was made, it was totally rejected by the government side, saying that it cost too much. The reality of the day was that it was money already available to the government to reprioritize its spending. At the time, the government offered a bill that said they would spend approximately \$25 million. As I said in my first response to Bill 148, I think the expenditure of \$25 million was laudable but it was not enough. In this case, it would have provided \$50 million that was going to be available to our communities to improve firefighting across the province.

The member opposite also said that they said, "We have safety and standards issues with this double-hatter issue." Quite frankly, let's take a step back and say to the member opposite that the municipalities are short-changed. Why would they not want to support this bill simply because the government has not provided enough funds for them to have those standards set in the first place? The municipalities are saying to us, "We don't have the money. We just don't have the money."

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member from London-Fanshawe, come to order.

Mr Levac: The members on the opposite side are quite prepared to heckle, because we're talking about the real issue: the underfunding of our municipal fire departments across Ontario. We've now turned this into an urban versus rural issue, and the fact that we've done that is deplorable.

I also want to make a couple of points about the professional firefighters. The member introduced the bill on May 22, and he met with them on May 30. I was told that the meeting was respectful and both sides tried to make points. The member was putting the bill before that, and he knew it. How soon did he meet with all of the other organizations in this case? There are threats on both sides of, "Your side is wrong." We're not getting the right answers here because AMO sent out a memo that basically said there are over 2,000 double-hatters. The fire marshal himself said it's between 600 and 1,000. I continued to ask the question, and when pressed, he said, "Well, it's on the low side of the 600 to 1,000. It's probably somewhere between 600 and 700 double-hatters."

The reality of the day is another point that needs to be made, and that is one of justice. The reality we're talking about here is making sure those municipalities receive the training that they say is not there because the double-hatters have to go to those municipalities and provide that training. Why would the government not then make sure that all those municipalities have accessible the training that's necessary in order to allow us to do that? It's not happening. It's an abdication of responsibility.

A second question: why would the government not step forward and say, "This is a priority for us and this is something we should be doing"? The private member's bill is addressing a small need in four communities across the province. There's an inconsistency across the argument. The inconsistency arises when we start looking at some municipalities without being able to solve this problem in negotiation. The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters are now in concert with the minister's office that's responsible for fire safety, public safety and security. They're talking with the fire chiefs' association. They're talking with AMO. They're in the middle of these negotiations to try to resolve concerns within their constitution.

That brings up the second point about somebody reaching into the constitution of an organized group. Is this going to start happening now? Where does it stop? Where does it start?

We see what happened with Bill 160 where we were told that this funding formula doesn't work and now we're going to be heroes and correct it when they were told all along it's not the way to proceed; Bill 58, Hydro. You can name examples where the government has proceeded with government bills and it always has to come back and correct them: city financing and taxation, seven different bills at one time, one right after the other to correct the mistakes they were making when they were getting advice from the stakeholders on how to solve the problem. Now in the middle of these negotiations that are taking place between the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters and all stakeholders we have legislation that comes in and says, "This is how it's going to be done." That's not good negotiation.

If you think this bill is going to solve the problem that's being alluded to in a dramatic way—there's intimidation going on and there are things going on between the two associations—it's not going to happen.

Mr Arnott: You're saying there is no intimidation?

Mr Levac: What did I say? Pay attention, Ted.

Mr Arnott: I'm listening intently.

Mr Levac: If you think this bill is going to solve the problem you're alluding to, you're dead wrong. You're sending it underground, and that's a problem.

Mr Arnott: Are you in support of intimidation?

Mr Levac: Quite frankly, what you're talking about is doing the same type of intimidation to a group. You're putting a bill out there that says, "This is how you're going to write your constitution." That, to me, represents how the government escapes all the time. It's always

download, cut and burden the municipalities with those responsibilities. How else are they supposed to respond?

Interjections.

Mr Levac: If you were providing in the first place that activity that was necessary for them, in order for them to receive the funding for the training that's necessary, the reliance on that particular issue would not take place. The government is not funding those communities appropriately, particularly the small communities that have been saying to you for many years, including all governments, that there's a double standard. There's enough money being raised by some municipalities that they're providing those services.

The fire marshal is making recommendations that are all over the map. In one breath they're saying, "You know what? This might solve the problem," but then again if you look at the four other options that are available, there are pros and cons for each one of them. At the end of the day, the fire marshal made it quite clear—and if I have to read it, I will—that unless every single two-hatter was removed instantly, there would not be safety and health issues. It's not there.

There are questions that need to be answered. What about WSIB? Who's going to be responsible for anyone who gets hurt and, tragically and unfortunately if it does happen, God forbid, there's a death? Who's going to be responsible? The municipality that has the professional firefighter on it? The local municipality that has the volunteer?

1020

In terms of the volunteers we also speak of the average salary, the average wage, a wide-ranging issue. There are some who say, "You know what? We should be volunteering for no cost at all." Others are saying they're paying up to \$30 an hour. The professional training that one is talking about should be coming from a standard that's established by the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Oxford, come to order.

Mr Levac: The province of Ontario is abdicating its responsibility to ensure—we now have a private members' bill that's going to step right in the middle of this. Quite frankly, I'm disappointed. I'm also disappointed—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I'm not warning the member for Oxford again.

Mr Levac: I'm also concerned, definitely concerned, about anyone using intimidation tactics on any individual in this province. I don't accept the reality that this is the solution, because you're simply sending it underground. You're not providing for the government's responsibility. You're not providing for the things that I said at the very beginning.

What's happening here? Now the government is able to step away from the fact that it has created a crisis between urban and rural communities. It has not funded the small rural, small urban communities. They need that. The Ontario security fund that was proposed by my

leader, Dalton McGuinty, provided an opportunity to have \$50 million provided to those communities, at their call, for the very reason we're talking about today. We indicated quite clearly in the preamble that that money was for safety, for security, for improvement of the fire department and the police department in those communities. It was rejected by this government. Why? Because we're talking about cost containment. We're not talking about safety and security; we're talking about cost containment.

Quite frankly, I can't support a bill that sticks its hand in the middle of somebody's constitution, and in the middle of the negotiations that are taking place that are slowly and methodically solving that issue. I challenge each of the organizations, each and every one, to do so in the best interest of the public at large.

The last comment I would make to you is that if this bill gets to committee, I'm going to be offering amendments that I'm sure the government will have to consider because they know it's the right thing to do. If they don't accept this amendment, it's because they're abdicating their responsibility to provide those communities with the funds to do that. I'll guarantee you, if you provide those funds, AMO will be on side with this request by the professional firefighters that it receive the total number of funds required. Their argument right now is simply financial.

I do not support this bill.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I want to commend my colleague the member from Waterloo-Wellington for bringing this important piece of legislation forward.

I'm shocked at the member from Brant who suggests that by bringing this debate forward in the House somehow this issue is going to be pushed underground. I believe that is an insult to every stakeholder involved in this, suggesting that a public debate in the Legislature of this province on an important issue would somehow force an issue to be dealt with in a dishonest way, that somehow the stakeholders here would not comply with the direction, the legislation, of this province. I don't believe that for a minute and I really believe the member needs to reconsider his position.

I'm supporting this legislation today, because I believe that at stake is a fundamental principle of rights. I believe that if this legislation is not passed, if somehow we don't deal with this issue, then this Legislature effectively is condoning discrimination against a profession, against full-time firefighters in this province, who do not have the rights any other worker in his province has, to do in their spare time what they choose to do. I believe it's fundamentally wrong. I commend the member for bringing this forward and we have a responsibility to do something about it.

I have a letter here that was sent to a firefighter in Whitchurch-Stouffville by the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters' Association. "With the firefighters in Stouffville currently trying to negotiate their first collective agreement, your involvement as a part-time firefighter will definitely have a negative impact on other full-time

firefighters in that region”—no reference to health and safety issues. This is purely and outrightly an issue of union negotiation. I think it's fundamentally wrong and we cannot endorse it.

I have a letter from the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville: “Urgent action by your government is required. In Stouffville’s case, 24 out of 55, or 44%, of our volunteers are double-hatters. Seven have received threatening letters and I expect the other 17 will receive similar correspondence very shortly.” That letter from the firefighters’ association, and this is to a full-time firefighter in this province, goes on to say, “We are requesting that you comply with the TPFPA constitution ... and stop performing your duties as a part-time firefighter. This will allow the firefighters in Stouffville to negotiate a collective agreement without the negative impact of full-time firefighters masquerading as part-time firefighters.” This is not about health and safety. This is about denying a particular group in our province the right to do in their spare time as they choose to do.

We have a problem in Richmond Hill as well. I have a letter I’d like to quote from: “To suggest to the two-hatters’ permanent employer”—this is the municipality—“that their employment”—that is the full-time firefighters’ employment—“should be terminated or threatened because the two-hatter is not a member in good standing of his or her firefighters’ association is an abuse of the association’s power. The employees’ work record should be the basis of any actions regarding employment tenure, not conformity with arbitrary rules of a union” today.

I will be supporting this legislation, not because I’m not suggesting that there may be issues to be worked out or that there are problems. There may even be some challenges on the funding side. I’m not denying that. But fundamentally here before us in the House today, this legislation deals with giving rights to men and women in our province who are denied those rights as a result of being excluded from a piece of labour legislation. We need to rectify that. This will restore their rights with every other person, every other worker in Ontario. We have a responsibility as a Legislature to do that today.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): It is a pleasure to rise and speak in support of Bill 30, introduced by my colleague from Waterloo-Wellington. I think it’s a very appropriate bill to deal with the issue of volunteerism in our communities.

I want to start off, Mr Speaker, by thanking him for introducing the bill, but more so, to you and the members of the Legislature, to point out my personal bias. I have had the opportunity to serve as a volunteer firefighter for 25 years. I want to say that at the conclusion of the 25 years, because I was elected to this place, I no longer could attend to my duties as a volunteer firefighter, so I took my leave. The fire marshal of the province gave me a plaque, and it hangs in my office, right alongside the plaque I got for being a minister of the crown. I can tell you I take as great a pride in looking at that plaque, having served as a volunteer firefighter, as having been a minister of the crown in Ontario.

I think it’s a noble profession. At many times in my 25 years in the fire service I was told that when the firefighters go to an emergency, the fire is just as hot for volunteers as it is for full-time firefighters. So I think it tells us that it’s very important that we have our volunteers well trained and that we have the best possible community people to volunteer to do this job.

I agree with my colleague from Oak Ridges, who suggests we should not take away a full-time firefighter’s right to volunteer. There seems to be some argument that these are being forced into volunteering, that somehow we’re taking that expertise and saying, “We want you to take all this expertise you’ve gained working in the full-time fire department and we are forcing you to take it into the volunteer regime.” Nothing could be further from the truth. These are community-minded people who want to help their friends and neighbours in time of need through the volunteer fire service. I think we should do all we can to make that possible so they can provide that service.

1030

As I said, I started with the volunteer fire department in 1971. We set up the new fire department. At the time the department was being organized by a full-time firefighter who had served in the armed forces. He became the fire chief and he served as fire chief for some 20 years. At that time we went to a retirement party, and his comment was that the hardest thing he’s ever had to do in the fire service as a volunteer was retiring at age 65 because he wanted to continue serving his community. I think this is the type of opportunity that these full-time firefighters who work in the volunteer sector are providing for us. They’re doing it because they want to.

The member opposite was—I think they call it in political terms fearmongering, that somehow this is going to be a great problem with workers’ compensation. In the volunteer department, as in the full-time department, the WSIB covers, regardless of where you work in the province of Ontario. The municipality buys the coverage for their volunteers at a set rate. My municipality where I was a volunteer purchased the highest rate possible of any worker to get workers’ compensation. So it makes absolutely no difference to the individual where they are working. If they are injured in the service of their community, they will be covered by WSIB. So I don’t see that as a great reason.

The other thing that was brought to our attention was that there’s a problem in that you may be volunteering for 12 hours fighting a fire and then be asked to go to work. I understand the problem but I would just suggest to you that many firefighters, for whatever reason, because of how they have to be on call seven days a week, have times when they are not working and they’d like to do other jobs. It makes absolutely no difference to me whether they’re working 12 hours driving the tractor ploughing the field or whether they’re fighting a fire, if they’re called in on their full-time job, they will be tired if they were working the previous 12 hours. So I don’t believe that’s a legitimate reason not to support this bill.

I would submit to the House that the right of these individuals to volunteer should not be taken away and communities should not be deprived of their expertise to help them in time of need.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak in support of this bill. I would urge everyone in this House, including those who have spoken against it, to support this bill for the betterment of our rural communities.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I wish I could say that I'm pleased to be standing to debate this particular bill, but to tell you the truth I'm not pleased to have to be dealing with this issue in this way in this House. Frankly, I wish it hadn't come to this. It's sad really that things have been allowed to degenerate the way they have.

I suppose it's perhaps helpful to say no one's guilty but all of us are responsible. This issue's been kicking around for a long time. I can recall some conversations back in October, making some suggestions about how to get this thing resolved. Clearly, the issue hasn't been resolved and it has caused a great deal of difficulty.

We talk a lot about rights; we talk a fair bit about choices that from time to time need to be made. I want to say to members of the House that this is a very difficult issue for me, having grown up in a blue-collar labour family with an inclination to have a knee-jerk reaction often simply in favour of my union brothers and sisters. But there's a broader set of rights involved here that I think need to be spoken to.

It is difficult for me, as a small-town mayor who relied on a volunteer department and the expertise of two-hatters in my community, to conceive of someone with expertise, who's acknowledged as having expertise, who's my neighbour living beside me and, if my house catches fire and another volunteer is quite competent but maybe doesn't have the same skill set as the two-hatter who's willing to volunteer in my community, having to say to me, "I'm sorry your house is on fire, Ted. I can't help. I've got a union problem with this." It just doesn't strike me as being right.

It also doesn't strike me as being right that in any municipality across this great province and country of ours—by the way, I think Ontario is the only province that doesn't provide protection for two-hatters; perhaps the Northwest Territories as well—we would say, "You don't have the right to use your skill set in defence of life and property."

In addition, there's a community set of rights here, and old history and heritage. This isn't about setting up something new. It's about protecting something that has been in place for decades and centuries; that really, in large part, has represented the spirit of communities.

It also talks to municipal rights. We know that AMO is on side with trying to protect the two-hatter situation and others.

I was to have five minutes. I now have 19 seconds. I would just say that the fire marshal's report made reference to a number of options, none of which was the status quo.

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: Just give me a second. I'm on your side on this one, OK?

If it's helpful, I'd like to read: "Unlike municipal solutions which may vary depending on the option selected by each municipality, the legislative solution would provide an expedient and uniform solution to the two-hatter issue."

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On behalf of New Democrats here at Queen's Park, I have carefully read this proposed bill—indeed, a bill that received first reading and is here today on debate for second reading. Mr Arnott has been very generous and co-operative in providing all of the material that he has acquired supporting this bill.

It includes a letter of commendation from AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Quite frankly, that raises red flags right away for New Democrats.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: Well, the track record of AMO when it comes to working women and men has not been particularly strong.

As well, I have consulted extensively on my own. I appreciate the participation that I've had in the formulation of our position during the course of those consultations.

Bill 84 changed the face of firefighting dramatically in this province. Firefighters fought Bill 84. New Democrats fought it, as did members of the Liberal caucus. I recall committee hearings across this province. I recall the incredibly effective campaign by firefighters in opposition to Bill 84. As a result of that, firefighters were able to obtain some modest concessions.

This double-hatting scenario is one that has certainly accelerated in terms of the frequency of confronting it and the difficulties it has posed since Bill 84. Nobody in this Legislature, in any way, shape or form, would ever, in my view—I haven't seen it in the 14 years I've been here, and I don't expect to see it in however many more years the folks of Niagara Centre intend to have me represent them—disparage any firefighter in this province, be that firefighter a full-time employee or be that firefighter a volunteer.

The reality is that the nature of volunteer firefighting has changed substantially. Municipalities are contracting—those hybrid municipalities which have full-time firefighting forces and volunteer forces as well.

1040

Today, just before I got here, I saw the letter from the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada to Steve Pandur of a Welland volunteer fire company, nominating that fire company for the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada Ontario Award for Firefighting Department of the Year, at which point it will then be in the national competition—well deserved and, obviously, in that case, because of the because of the participation that volunteers and full-time firefighters have had in raising funds, notwithstanding this government's squeegee bill. You should note that the squeegee bill shut them down

last September in Welland when one local crank called the police and the police were obliged to tell firefighters to get off the street, to put those boots back on and stop collecting money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada.

Volunteer fire companies have been organizing into unions and I support that. I support the right of volunteer firefighters to belong to unions, be it the IWA or the Teamsters, or the union of their choice if it's not the IWA or Teamsters. They've become involved in collective bargaining processes. I support the right of people to join unions and I put to you that unions are democratic institutions wherein the membership of those unions elect their leadership and draft and compose their constitutions and their bylaws.

I say it is not for this Legislature to tell the members of a union or a professional association, as from time to time it might be wont to call itself, how to construct their constitution. It is for their membership to determine how those constitutions are to read.

Just as I respect the constitutions of the IWA or of the Teamsters, I respect the right of the professional firefighters' association of this province to draft their constitution and to set standards and bylaws for their membership, knowing full well that if that membership wants to change that constitution, then that membership should and can. It's not for me to tell workers in unions how to draft their bylaws, their standards and their constitutions.

Having said that, the issue of double-hatting has been of concern in a number of communities across this province. There has been some hyperbole attached to the nature of conflict. I'm advised that in Hamilton there was an agreement negotiated around the issue of double-hatting. I'm advised that in Ottawa there was an agreement reached with the Ottawa Transition Board. I'm also advised that the fire marshal has initiated a process of consultation where conflicts of interest around this issue—and I'm not disputing that there are conflicts of interest. There may well be. In fact, as you would be wont to say, Speaker, there is some evidence that would give rise to what might be considered some *prima facie* conflicts of interest. I understand that.

The fire marshal has initiated a process whereby there can be negotiation around those conflicts. Is the prohibition, if there is one, against full-time firefighters then functioning, in addition to their full-time jobs, in volunteer firefighting companies? Does it create for that individual full-time firefighter who has a legitimate, genuine interest in serving his or her home community, a piece of small-town Ontario separate and apart from the larger municipality in which they work full-time, does it constitute an impediment to that full-time firefighter serving his or her small-town community by virtue of participation in the volunteer fire services?

It's clear that's one of the many inferences that could be drawn. But having said that, the vast majority of volunteer firefighters in this province are not full-time firefighters. I don't in any way, and it would be naive for

anybody in this chamber to dispute the motivation of volunteer firefighters. I not only can take not quarrel with the proposition that volunteer firefighters are motivated by an interest to serve their communities, but I expound that position as enthusiastically and forcefully as one could.

My goodness, volunteer firefighters like the ones I know down in Niagara are not just there serving their communities and their volunteer companies in fire suppression and fire safety, but they're out there participating as first-line response teams to traffic accidents, boating accidents and medical crises—there are no two ways about it. They're also out there along with a whole lot of other folks raising money for muscular dystrophy, notwithstanding the stupid squeegee bill. They've done their best, notwithstanding being told from time to time, as a result of this government, to get off the streets and stop collecting money for MD. They're out there in other fundraising activities, and they're as strong a group of supportive community members as you could ever find.

The fundamental issue here is whether you believe in a trade union's right to write its own constitution. One of the hallmarks of a free and democratic society is the right of trade unions not only to exist but to exist without government interference.

Mr Klees: What about the Charter of Rights?

Mr Kormos: I put to this member—

Mr Klees: What about giving people rights?

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Kormos: —that we should have some great concern—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'll not warn the members for Oak Ridges or Oxford again.

Mr Kormos: —about a legislative agenda that so boldly would interfere with a trade union's right to write its own constitution.

At the end of the day, I don't believe this bill would serve anybody's interests, and let me explain why: I believe a negotiated resolution of what I acknowledge as a conflict of interests is the one that can best serve the interests of all involved. It's trite to point out that if you put people into an all-or-nothing situation, there are winners but at the same time there are losers.

I want to advocate for a far more progressive style of resolving this conflict. I don't always find myself in tune, onside or in harmony with the fire marshal; he understands that. But in this instance I think the process initiated by the fire marshal is preferable: a process of negotiation; a process of trying to find solutions that best serve the interests of volunteers and of full-time fire fighters; not this legislation but a process of negotiation, a process of value creation, if I may.

New Democrats can't support this legislation, and we won't. We will, however, continue to support volunteer firefighters. We will continue to call upon municipalities across this province to adopt minimum staffing standards, and we will continue to call upon any government, be it this government or its successor, to ensure that

municipalities have the funding and the resources they need to set and maintain those full and minimum staffing standards.

In what I call hybrid communities, like where I come from, the volunteer services have historically—and their histories are long—played an integral role in fire services. They continue to play that role. The dynamics of their relationship with the municipality have changed. Again, there are probably three groups of communities in this province: there are communities that are primarily, if not fully, volunteer; there are communities that are hybrid, like most of the communities I represent; and there are communities like London which are 100% full-time firefighters. So this is a scenario where one size doesn't fit all.

1050

The solution is in readdressing Bill 84. The solution is in returning to some of the arguments made by firefighters against Bill 84. The solution is ensuring that all municipalities, big and small, have adequate firefighting services with appropriate levels of staffing, appropriate levels of resources. In other words, give the firefighters the tools and the training they need because firefighters certainly want to do the training and are prepared to and will undertake it if given the opportunity, and, by God, they need the tools.

The solution is not to participate in the high-risk game of trying to play off one group of firefighters against another. New Democrats stand with the right of union members, be they IWA members, be they Teamsters members, be they members of the professional firefighters' association, to write their own constitutions, to determine bylaws, to determine standards for their membership. We stand with the Liberals in their opposition to this bill, and we call upon the author of this bill to understand that there are solutions, but they are not to be found in this legislative agenda.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm very pleased to speak in support of Bill 30, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, in order to protect the employment of volunteer firefighters. I congratulate my colleague Mr Ted Arnott, the member for Waterloo-Wellington, for bringing this bill before the House.

It is indeed an honour to speak up for the true heroes in our communities. Volunteer fire service is the ultimate example of effort and dedication. Volunteer firefighters answer the call every day and put their lives on hold while putting their life on the line. Some make the ultimate sacrifice.

There are more than 120,000 volunteer firefighters in Canada, a number that makes up 80% of the firefighters across this country. I had the pleasure of attending the Dorset-Algonquin Highlands firefighters' pig roast two Saturdays ago. The pig roast was fantastic, but I also had the honour of presenting the chief, Clint MacKay, with a 35-year plaque for his dedication to volunteering in the community. Such committed volunteerism has a long-standing tradition in our province. Volunteer firefighters

are part of the more than 2.3 million unsung heroes of all ages who volunteer in many different ways. Volunteers help keep our communities vibrant and healthy and make our province a much richer place to live.

The volunteer fire service is a proud community tradition that now finds itself under attack. The Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association is seeking to prevent its members from volunteering in community fire departments.

I quote from the Saturday, March 9, 2002, Lindsay Daily Post: "The city's fire chief is warning the level of public safety could be in jeopardy after two volunteer firefighters resigned due to union pressure, and 19 others may not be far behind."

According to the firefighters' association, people who spend their free time fighting fires and responding to all manner of emergencies might not perform well in their jobs when they return to work. They call their members who serve as volunteer firefighters "double-hatters." Well, all volunteer firefighters are double-hatters. They all have other jobs, they all have other ways to earn a living, because they certainly couldn't live on the money they receive from their local fire departments. In my community, if a volunteer firefighter responds to every call, he or she could earn up to \$2,800 a year.

The training standards and regulations placed on today's volunteer firefighters have resulted in a six- to eight-month training period before the average volunteer can be put on a fire truck. Professional firefighters who volunteer in their local communities are ready to go, right away, and the expertise that professional firefighters bring with them is invaluable. Sharing it with volunteer firefighters is a huge benefit.

The Ontario Fire College is located in my beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. A former principal of the college, Mr Eric Rainey, has provided many, many years of volunteer service for the Bracebridge fire department. His outstanding leadership is a fine example to professional firefighters everywhere around our province.

Our community fire departments need volunteers from many walks of life. Volunteers bring useful skills with them, no matter what their occupation. Expertise in dealing with municipal water systems, construction, mechanical or medical matters all contribute valuable knowledge to emergency response. And we need volunteers who are local residents, able to respond in a timely fashion and have detailed knowledge of the area.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that support from employers, large and small, as well as the self-employed, is essential to fire departments around this province. These employers allow their workers to answer the call for help. They do not threaten them with job loss; they support the commitment to their communities. The member from Niagara Centre seems more concerned with trade unions' constitutional rights than individual rights. Without the support of employers, volunteer fire departments simply could not exist.

Threatening professional firefighters with job loss for volunteering to fight fires on their own time, in their own

communities, alongside their own friends and neighbours, is like telling the good Samaritan to pass on by. It is clearly wrong. I call on members from both sides of this House to support the speedy and unhindered passage of Bill 30.

Hon John R. Baird (Associate Minister of Francophone Affairs): I'll speak in support of this legislation. We have a lot of great volunteer firefighters in Nepean-Carleton and the former townships of Osgoode, Rideau and Goulbourn and in the constituency of my colleague from Lanark-Carleton and West Carleton. They provide an excellent service to the people in my community. Many wear two or even three hats. That's why I'm very pleased to support this important piece of legislation brought forward by my good colleague from Waterloo-Wellington.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Waterloo-Wellington has two minutes to reply.

Mr Arnott: Once again, I want to thank the volunteer firefighters who are with us in the gallery today. Thank you for your presence today and thank you for the good work you do.

In the short time I have remaining, I wish to thank my colleagues who have participated in this debate: the member for Oak Ridges, the member for Oxford, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, the chief government whip, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot and the member for Niagara Centre. Thank you very much for your presentations this morning.

I would respond to my colleague the member for Brant. First of all, I want to express, I suppose, appreciation for his contribution, although I must say I fundamentally disagree with his conclusion about this bill. I felt that his unfocused remarks added little to this debate, and I was disappointed in that. He tried to bring partisan politics into this issue. I would reject the fact that there needs to be partisan politics in this issue. It's not an urban-versus-rural issue. It doesn't need to be painted that way.

When we suggest there aren't very many double-hatters, we attempt to diminish the scope of the problem. I would submit to you, sir, that if even one double-hatter is intimidated and threatened to resign, his volunteer force is weakened. That is not an acceptable tactic. I will continue to speak against this tactic. It is not my view that this needs to be a fight between volunteer firefighters and professional firefighters. What we're saying with this bill is that this tactic of threats and intimidation is unacceptable. That's the principle of this bill. If you in fact vote against this bill, you're suggesting at best that you're prepared to turn a blind eye to this unacceptable tactic; at worst, you're condoning it. I would ask you to reconsider your position and ask you to support this bill. I would ask all members of this House to support Bill 30.

ELECTRICITY CONTRACTS

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government must conduct an immediate review of the

conduct of electricity retailers in the province; put an immediate stop to the practice of soliciting electricity contracts door-to-door or via the telephone; introduce a standard contract used by all electricity retailers, forcing retailers to provide "apples to apples" price comparisons to protect consumers; and immediately begin a non-partisan public education campaign explaining what consumers should look for, and look out for, when signing electricity contracts.

1100

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order 96, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin has 10 minutes to make a presentation.

Mr Brown: This resolution today is but a very simple one. It asks the Eves government to act on behalf of the people of Ontario. It asks the Eves government to act now. It asks the Eves government to act decisively. It asks the Eves government to ban the practice of selling retail electricity contracts door-to-door or over the phone. It asks that contracts be clearly comparable in form and it asks that people be allowed to make informed choices, free from pressure, misinformation or just plain confusion.

I think that is what the people of Ontario want. I do not think that is what they're getting. Consumers are particularly vulnerable to acts by certain individuals and/or companies that cannot be effectively monitored by the government or by the regulator, the Ontario Energy Board. The Ontario Energy Board cannot possibly know what is being said at the doorstep. It obviously cannot hear the pitch that is being made at kitchen tables across this province. It cannot know the validity of the information being provided. It cannot know what slick spin is coming to consumers. The regulator plainly cannot know what each individual salesperson might be saying to my aunt, my mother, my brother, my children. It is not possible to know, and these salespeople appear totally unsolicited. They appear at your doorstep to solve a problem you didn't know you had.

My leader, Liberal Dalton McGuinty, placed a bill before the Legislature last February to allow for the cancellation of contracts signed under questionable circumstances. But I seek to go further. We have a huge market of consumers. Millions of Ontario consumers have not yet entered contracts. We must act to protect this market from questionable practices.

My office in Heyden and my office in Elliot Lake have had a large number of calls complaining of the practices of salespeople. Many of these practices, while questionable, may not be illegal, but they have certainly misrepresented the situation in this new market: the prices and the terms of the contract. The ability of Ontarians to make a logical, informed choice on the doorstep is obviously questionable and the regulator cannot possibly be able to monitor what private conversations take place there—unsolicited conversations, I might add.

Let's step back for a minute and understand here what is really being sold. I would suggest that what is really being sold door to door, unsolicited, is not energy or

electricity. I would suggest that it is in reality insurance. It is not the energy of the wind being harnessed and being sold. It is not gravity in the form of falling water being transformed into energy that's being sold. It is not combustion through the use of fossil fuels or biomass that's being sold. It is not the immense energy released from the splitting of atoms that's being sold. It's not the energy that's being supplied through the sun by way of solar panels etc. What is being sold here is not the generation of electricity; it is the generation of electricity coupled with an insurance component that seeks to guarantee a price. In essence, what is being sold is insurance. We have opened a vast new insurance market. I believe that a competitive market is a good thing, but I think consumers need to understand what's really being sold here.

The opening of the retail market on May 1 has opened a market unimaginable just a short while ago. I think every member of this Legislature would know it has caused a great deal of public concern over whether in fact they needed to sign a retail contract. Mr Speaker, you would know of course that they do not; you would know that consumers are free to just move with the market price. They do not need to buy the insurance provided through a contract. But if they believe electricity prices in this province may increase radically, many consumers would believe that the insurance provided through a contract is a good thing to purchase.

For example, we could have the Ontario Energy Board post on a Web site a chart showing comparable terms and prices. I believe that the Ontario Energy Board, upon being asked by a consumer, could provide that chart by way of the mail. I believe electricity retailers should advertise through all the various places in the media, whether that be television, radio, newspapers or flyers. They can use direct mail. I think there are all sorts of opportunities. I would suggest they can even open little shops in malls. They can do whatever they want. But I think in this particular market that having someone appear on your doorstep, in some cases, we have been told, actually cutting up a person's hydro bill in front of them, is a practice that we have no way of monitoring and no way of knowing what the pressure might be.

In my capacity as the critic for seniors, I know this particular group has some difficulty in some cases with this, because they clearly have been customers of whichever particular retailer, in most cases a public utility, for many years, and they don't understand what might happen. I also bring to light that it's not just those who are uninformed who may have problems. My friend from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Jean-Marc Lalonde, has had the experience of not having one contract forged; he's actually had two of these contracts forged. My friend from Renfrew recounts a particular incident about his father. He says that because the person who came to him was from Hydro One, he thought by signing with that company he was making a good deal. No one told him that he would be one of nearly 200,000 customers who signed up with Hydro One, only to have that entire book

of business sold away on the eve of the market opening to Union Energy, a wholly owned subsidiary of Epcor of Edmonton, Alberta. That's just another example of how Ontario consumers have been scammed and ripped off.

This is but a book of insurance. The question I'm really asking, when you boil it right down today, is, do you believe that this particular product, retail electricity insurance, should be sold door-to-door, unsolicited, by people we cannot monitor, where there is no way to monitor them, to consumers who, in many cases, have no idea that they might want to buy the product?

I think the government has done a very poor job of informing the public. I think the government has abrogated its responsibility. I think in the name of consumer protection, I think it only makes sense to ban the door-to-door or telephone solicitation of these contracts.

1110

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join in this debate. Quite frankly, we debated this type of resolution about a week ago. The resolution is absolutely unnecessary and I believe the members opposite should know that. Not only has our government already put mechanisms in place to protect consumers, but we're trying to enhance those protections. We're not getting help from the member for Algoma-Manitoulin and his colleagues. If anything, they're standing in the way of consumer protection with resolutions like the one we're dealing with today.

Electricity customers want this House to fix the shortcomings we've discovered in electricity retailing, not to shut the business down. The sooner the honourable member and his party move to support Bill 58, the sooner Ontario electricity consumers can be assured they will be even better protected from dishonest retailers than they already are.

As the member well knows, Bill 58, if passed by this House, will strengthen the Ontario Energy Board's powers against unfair marketing and retailing practices. It contains strong prohibitions against false advertising. If it is passed, it will enact a new energy consumers' bill of rights that would allow the government to tell retailers what their contracts should look like and what information they should contain. It would enhance cancellation rights by increasing the existing 10-day right to cancel to 30 days. Not only that, a contract would only take effect after the customer reaffirmed it. Customers would also have to reaffirm contract renewals. The negative renewal option would no longer apply.

These are the kinds of protections people in Ontario told Minister Stockwell they wanted to see when he consulted around the province last month. He listened to their concerns. Bill 58 is a response to them, as well as actions already taken by the energy board with respect to dealing with and penalizing retailers' actions previous to Bill 58.

Ending electricity retailing would be a step backward. We've had some growing pains. We've heard about unscrupulous retailers going door-to-door or marketing over the phone. That happens with any product out there.

There are already protections in place through the Consumer Protection Act and the Criminal Code if we're dealing with fraud or misrepresentation. We're here to fix the problems that are out there. It doesn't mean we should prevent electricity customers from enjoying the benefits that come with electricity retailing, things like the peace of mind that comes from locking in an energy price and knowing what it's going to be for the length of the contract, or the ability to contribute to environmental protection by choosing green energy.

Close to a million Ontario electricity customers have chosen from among retailer offerings. They've decided to let retailers assume the risks of electricity price fluctuations. Retailers have been selling natural gas door to door in Ontario since 1990 and hundreds of thousands of customers have benefited. Why would anyone want to take that opportunity out of the electricity sector?

I'm somewhat surprised this resolution is coming from a Liberal. I might expect it from a New Democrat. They're opposed to choice and open markets. The Liberals, on the other hand, have always claimed to support the notion of competition in order to bring private sector discipline to the electricity sector and put an end to spiralling debt.

Instead of trying to turn back the clock, instead of returning us to the days of the monopoly and of 94% increases, the members opposite should be helping the government and customers by supporting choice. They should be promoting competition to fix the problems of the past and to safeguard our electricity future.

Our government is promoting competition by providing a strong regulatory framework and by educating customers so they can exercise choice. We've conducted an extensive consumer education program aimed at developing a broader awareness of electricity restructuring and informing consumers about the options available to them. Information and educational materials have been provided through brochures, fact sheets, utility bill inserts, a toll-free information line, the ministry Web site and radio, print and television advertising.

In my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, I haven't heard anything of what the member is speaking about, through Barrie Hydro, which is a reputable operator, and the same with Innisfil Hydro.

We on this side believe that informed consumers are empowered consumers. We will continue to see they have all the information they need to exercise their right to choose. Education and regulation is how you strengthen consumer protection. You don't do it by shutting down a retail market and taking away choice.

Before I wrap up, I want to take a minute to remind members why the government has opened the electricity market. We did it because the old Ontario Hydro monopoly was no longer working. It was suffering from mismanagement and waste, and by 1999 it had accumulated debt and other liabilities of \$38 billion. That's \$10,000 for each one of its customers and more than \$3,000 for every man, woman and child in this province. Something had to be done, and we have done that.

The Liberal resolution today would reverse a well-known former federal Liberal finance minister, Donald Macdonald, who supports the path we're taking and not the path we're looking at now. I don't support the resolution.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I am pleased to stand and speak in support of Mr Brown's resolution. It's a wonderful initiative that talks about protection of the public interest.

I heard the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford talk about choice. The problem is, neither the people selling at the door nor the people receiving know what they're buying. They don't know what the choice is. It's nice to have a choice, but you have to have a premise from which that choice is provided.

I want to speak to the whole notion of soliciting electricity contracts. I have a number of individuals who have come to my office and I have dealt with their particular examples of how electricity is being sold. Remember that the government is in charge of this whole deregulation issue, so they should have put protections in place before, not after. They've included gas retailers—the same thing—in their fixing up. As the member from Barrie suggested, they've got to fix up the problem. They created the problem, and they didn't anticipate and didn't put protections in there for the consumer.

I'll give you some examples. Dave is an 81-year-old senior. Direct Energy pressured him. They said to him, "All we want you to say is yes. You're going to have to sign up with somebody pretty soon or you won't be able to get electricity." These are the things that were told to him.

Dave came to us and said, "I don't know what to do. I didn't want to sign this." We were able to deal with it, but if I gave you the whole story of talking to both the salesperson and the Direct Energy account people, it was a nightmare.

Don didn't even sign a contract. The signature on the contract with his name is not his signature. So we've got fraud here.

Mr Tascona: Somebody call the police.

Ms Di Cocco: Oh, absolutely. It's out there. People are unsuspecting victims because this government puts no protection for the consumers of electricity in this province. You open up the market and everybody helps themselves.

Mr Tascona: What are the police for? Call the police.

Ms Di Cocco: They got Stephanie's daughter, who is mentally challenged, to sign a contract at the door. The mom wasn't there for a few minutes. She came back, and sure enough her daughter had signed a contract.

The same thing with Jacky, 70 years old, who states he became scared at the door. He was actually frightened. Again, the same tactic: "If you don't sign up, you're not going to have any electricity."

Peter, 80 years old—again, it seems they have the same thing. He was frightened of what was happening, because he said his electricity was going to be cut off.

These are some. I have many more, but I don't have the time to list them all. These are actual cases, and the

government has a responsibility to protect their interests. That's why we have to support this resolution. This kind of solicitation at the door has to stop.

1120

When it comes to the public interest, the Harris-Ernie Eves government has shown by its action that it has forgotten what is meant by "the public interest." They've attempted this privatization coup that has failed and is a mess because of a court order. And all the debacle has been created over the last few weeks because we were able to peek under the cloak of secrecy that was thrown over the successor Ontario Hydro companies. That cloak of secrecy was wrapped around the successor Ontario Hydro companies by the Harris-Eves duo because they removed the successor Ontario Hydro companies from public scrutiny.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Very convenient.

Ms Di Cocco: And conveniently so. Is that the public interest? Is the public interest being protected? I don't think so. The public interest is not protected from the soliciting and the selling of electricity, nor was it being protected when the successor companies were divided up.

Over the last few days we've heard all this rhetoric, "Oh, my, we've got to fix this mess; it's such a problem." It couldn't have been stated better—this is from the *Globe and Mail*—and I loved Brian Milner's analogy: "But as Mr Eves and his energy minister, Chris Stockwell, fume in outrage, we are once again reminded (it happens a lot) of Claude Rains in *Casablanca*"—people who are my age understand that—"as he is about to shut down Rick's Café for illicit gambling. 'I'm shocked! Shocked to find that gambling is going on in here,' he declares just as a croupier hands him his winnings." The fact is that the government knew back in 1999 what has been going on with Hydro One and the rest of the successor companies.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I've listened with awe to some of the statements being made here today. I heard about natural gas being sold on the streets since 1990, and in fact there is nothing erroneous about that statement. It has been sold on the streets since 1990. But in spite of that, we saw the problems of selling retail natural gas on the streets, we saw the gas spikes of a few years ago, and tenants, particularly in the city of Toronto and in the major cities of this province, are paying a huge price for that deregulation, for that sale at the door, for the natural gas spikes that have taken place.

This government has done nothing to help them in their time of trouble, and I expect they will do nothing to help the electrical consumer at the same time.

To go just a little bit further on the natural gas spikes and how they're playing out every day at the tenant review tribunal in Toronto, every day there are landlords going before that tribunal and they're saying that they signed contracts for energy, for natural gas in their apartments, which are way and above what one can buy natural gas for, or that they didn't buy a contract. They

can win both ways here, you see. They didn't buy the contract, and they're relying on the spike from a couple of years ago as their energy cost, and they are being rewarded for their incompetence. They're being rewarded by this government with above-guideline increases. Every tenant in almost every apartment building in Toronto where the landlord has done it has been gouged with additional increases for costs that are no longer borne. It's a clear example of what happens when you just allow an unfettered, unregulated market to go out and sell these kinds of things.

I ask any of you to go and ask a tenant with an above-guideline increase how he or she got that. I guarantee you, nine times out of 10 it's for gas costs for an unregulated market, which you have allowed to proceed and which you have no interest whatsoever in protecting them from. Now I see here that you have no interest, again, in protecting consumers who are being gouged by similar types of people at the door.

At least with natural gas, people have a choice. If you choose not to heat your home with natural gas, you can reconvert back to oil, or you can put in electric space heaters or you can put in insulation or you can do a number of things to lower your costs. But how do people have a choice with electricity, other than setting up a generator, which is pretty difficult, in your house, apartment or condominium? Other than going down to the Honda dealership, buying a generator, plugging into that and having the constant noise and fumes of gasoline burning, how else do you get by without electricity? How do you turn on your television and lights? How does your refrigerator work? How do any of the modern conveniences that we all need every day work?

People have a reliance on electricity, which goes so far as to make them absolutely afraid. They are afraid of losing their electrical service and they are afraid, if the costs skyrocket beyond their ability to pay, that they will no longer be able to use their televisions, their computers or any of the other electrical instruments or gadgets in their houses that they rely upon every day, some of them even to the point of health and public safety. Some of them are even machines that keep people alive. They are afraid.

It is with knowing this fear that the energy retailers are going to the door. "Tie in with us now. We can make sure that you keep your electricity. We will squeeze every last cent out of you but we will make sure that you will keep your electricity." The reality is that people are afraid. People don't know what to do. They have never had to negotiate for electricity before. They are simply not informed. People have come to my office by the dozens, asking, "What does it cost for a kilowatt hour? How much do I pay for electricity? How much more is this contract I've just signed? Have I been duped? I didn't know what I was doing." They are coming by the dozens and dozens. Primarily these people who are being duped are older, have less education, are afraid. They are just not with it. They can go to the supermarket and they can compare at the Dominion or at Sobeys the cost of a

head of lettuce. They will know that one is 79 cents and one is 69 cents and at which place they're likely to buy it. They know that they can shop in two stores and look at the commodities which they understand. But they don't understand kilowatts, megawatts or ohms. They have never had to do this before. With the greatest of respect, to simply pounce and deregulate the market without the kind of training whereby people would know to look for something that's going to cost around 3 cents or 4 cents is leaving these guys unfettered. It's like turning wolves on to a pack of sheep. They are just there and they are going to take complete advantage whenever they can.

I have sat here for the last five weeks, I have to tell you, in complete awe of what has happened in this province and what is in this Legislature. In December, when the former Premier got up to leave, he left one parting shot. As if he hadn't done enough to the province already, he left with one parting shot, and that parting shot was this electricity bill about selling Hydro One. I think the people opposite must rue that day. They must have wondered what was happening to them at a time when they hoping for renewal, new leadership and a new direction. What did they get? They got the parting shot from the outgoing Premier, who has saddled you with one of the worst political problems that I have ever in my life witnessed, either inside or outside the House, either in city hall or on the streets. I have never seen the machinations that have gone on here in this Legislature for the last five weeks.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): They're doing a good job in Ottawa too.

Mr Prue: I don't know. I'm watching Ottawa too. They're doing a good job, but not as good as you guys in terms of being skewered on your own petard. I want to tell you, I have never seen that.

I don't know whether to thank the past Premier or not. It's all too easy to sit here on the opposition side and chortle at what he has done to you. He did so much to so many people—to nurses, to doctors, to teachers, to welfare mothers, to everyone else—but this is the ultimate coup. He's actually done it to his own people. He's set you on a road for which I think you have no outcome. You have here an enormous problem on all levels of electricity, whether it's the door-to-door sales, OPG or selling Hydro One—just all of it.

1130

The bill we have here today is a review of the retailers. We have all read the newspaper accounts. I would think every single member opposite is just like me and has had people come in, disturbed and upset about the retailers at their door. You must have seen one—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Not one.

Mr Prue: Not one. There you go. You must be lucky. You must have no old and infirm people. You must have no door-to-door retailers who are ripping them off. Lucky for you. I wish I was that lucky, and I wish my community was that lucky.

You've all seen the newspapers and you've all read about the aggressive tactics. We in the New Democratic

Party had to laugh a little because for a couple of weeks there, as Howard Hampton was going around the province warning about this kind of situation, we even had the retailers—who were very smart. They adopted a door-to-door sales policy showing Howard Hampton saying, "Your prices are going to go up. You need to sign here. You need to trust Howard Hampton. Please sign here on the line because if you don't, your prices are going to go up." They had a bit of a mini sales boom over all of that. I have to tell you that these guys have been to my door many times. They keep coming, company after company, trying to sell the product.

Mr Wettlaufer: If they were using scare tactics, what does that say about Howard?

Mr Prue: It's always the same silly story: "You have to do this to protect yourself."

Interjection.

Mr Prue: At least we have a leader who's here in the House often. I wish we could say the same about your party.

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I think he's been here as much as yours.

Mr Prue: I don't think so. Anyway, I still think he's better than your former one. I have to give you that. He's still better than your former one.

Mr Hardeman: Stick with the facts.

Mr Prue: I'm sticking with the facts. They've been at my door and they're always there with the same silly story. They're always trying to prey upon people's fears. I can laugh at them, but I want to tell you that many people do not. Many people have succumbed. There are more than a million people who have succumbed.

The member opposite from Bradford-Simcoe did say that some of this has already been addressed, and that's true. I have to think that the member who is presenting the bill today had written this prior to the government bill. What he is saying about ending the practice, that's OK. What he's saying about the standard contract, that's OK. What he's saying about non-partisan education, I think that's absolutely essential and we can agree with that.

We are going to support his bill, but the bill doesn't go near far enough to the gravity of the situation that is out there. The failure of this particular bill here today is that it does not give redress to the more than one million people who have signed contracts. It does not allow them to get out of those contracts, even though many of them, with the hindsight of time, have discovered that the signing of the contract was not in their best financial interest, even though with the hindsight of time they know it is not going to offer the panacea they thought it was, even though with the hindsight of time they wish they had not or maybe wish they had signed with some other retailer who would have given them a better deal.

There are more than a million people out there who signed these contracts and who are now stuck with them and who now in the next few weeks are going to come out and find their first bill on their doorstep. They are going to see, very sadly, that the costs of their electricity

vis-à-vis what they were paying at this time last year have gone up and have gone up significantly. In spite of the brave words here and in spite of the markets showing that costs have remained fairly steady up until this point because we haven't had any major heat problems this summer, they're going to see that they have in fact paid too much.

There are a million people out there who are crying out. There are a million people out there who wish they would have the opportunity to renegotiate. This bill does not allow for that. They have found out they're paying too much. They have found out they were pressured. They are finding out that maybe this wasn't a good deal after all.

That is a failure of the bill because it does not deal with them. I know it's very difficult to do retroactive bills. It's very difficult to change things that have already been, but from time to time governments do make that decision when they feel something has been done wrongly. They can make amends for legislation which had not foreseen this.

When the member opposite spoke, he said this was to redress some of the things that could not have been seen. Surely this could have been seen. Simply following what was happening with deregulated natural gas would have shown you what would have happened with electricity, and it would happen not just in the same way, but even worse, because electricity is a commodity for which there are no substitutes. The government should have foreseen.

The problem with this bill is that it's failing to call for a review of the system. It is simply saying, "Here we are. We're out there selling the electrical market. We're out there allowing door-to-door salesmen, and we don't disagree that these door-to-door salesmen should be allowed to do it." In our party, we think this is fundamentally wrong. We have said this from the beginning. We do not believe in the privatization either in how hydro is produced or how it is sold or the transmission lines. We believe it is a public commodity.

I served on a Hydro board for some five years myself, and in all the time I served on that board and in all the time I was a local councillor and was connected with Hydro in the community, we never had the kinds of problems we are seeing here today with consumers. We never saw the consumers ripped off. We never had them angry about the prices. We never had them angry about how they were being talked to at the door. We never had them worried about what was going to happen with Hydro One. We never had them worried about OPG. We never had them worried about anything. They were satisfied with the commodity that was being delivered. Now when we're in the competitive market, we have the whole problem of caveat emptor. I'm saying to the people, "When those guys come to your door, notwithstanding this bill, simply tell them no."

Mr Sampson: I'm pleased to stand and say a few words on this particular resolution. It's not a bill; it's a resolution—I draw that to the attention of the member from the NDP caucus.

Mr Prue: A slip of the tongue.

Mr Sampson: That's right.

Actually, I think there are some valid points the member for Algoma-Manitoulin has raised in this resolution, the majority of which, by the way, I believe are captured by Bill 58, which was tabled by—

Interjection.

Mr Sampson: I'm just drawing to your—

Mr Brown: The resolution was first.

Mr Sampson: Sure—which the Minister of Energy has tabled and may or may not be before this House today or this evening. It's actually in the form of a bill which will have attendant regulations, which I think will drive some of the things that you were looking for in your resolution.

I'm also pleased to speak to this very briefly because I think there are very few people in this province who haven't at one time had to answer their door or their phone to somebody who was marketing some product or other. In fact, it happened to me just last week, believe it or not. By the way, much to the annoyance of just about everybody who's listening, it usually happens at the time you're either having dinner or you're about to head out to something or you're about to go and do something you have been planning to do. Sure enough, the phone or the doorbell rings. The doorbell rang at our place. It was our Sunday dinner time. We try to have dinner together as a family. I go to the door, and it's somebody who is marketing long-distance telephone contracts. I said, "Hello." The first comment out of their mouth was, "I need to see your long-distance phone bill." It wasn't, "Hello. How are you doing?" It was, "I need to see your long-distance phone bill." You know what? I'm not too sure I could even produce my long-distance phone bill on that kind of notice. I'm not even too sure where it sits in the house any more. It's under a stack of papers somewhere, no doubt. Hopefully, it's a paid bill as opposed to an unpaid bill.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): Your reputation precedes you.

Mr Sampson: Thank you, Minister. I really appreciate that comment from the Chair of Management Board.

These types of marketing trends, these behaviours, have been going on for some time. To somehow lay this at the feet of electricity reform is unfair, to be mild about that comment. In fact, I dare say the members who are standing and speaking to this resolution who sit in this House on a regular day do a little bit of door-to-door canvassing themselves every once in a while, whether it's at election time during writ period—and some of my colleagues actually do that between writs.

1140

I think what you're trying to get at, I say to the member opposite, is that you're hoping to have some code of behaviour established so that those who don't want to answer the door or want to have time to consider the options that are being given to them at the door are given

that option. I think a code of behaviour, a standard of behaviour, is well in order, not just for electrical marketers but for those who are selling life insurance, long-distance telephone contracts, you name it, door to door; God forbid, maybe even politicians who are selling themselves door to door. Well, maybe not.

But I'm worried that the member's resolution is taking that one step further, which is going to start to erode some of the benefits, I should say, of door-to-door marketing, any marketing.

I will finish by saying that strangely enough this door-to-door salesperson who came to my door trying to sell me a long-distance contract actually got me thinking about my long-distance contract. I started to pay attention to the volumes of ads that are on the airwaves, on the TV and in the papers these days, and I have started to take a very aggressive look at whether or not indeed I'm paying too much for my long-distance bill. A little bit of research proves that indeed I was. So as a result of competition, I may be able to save myself a few pennies, for which, on behalf of the other members of my family, I would say thank you very much, because that allows us to spend that money elsewhere or perhaps not spend it elsewhere and put it in the bank, which is another good thing to be doing with surplus cash these days.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): They're not paying any interest at all.

Mr Sampson: We can talk about the interest, if you will, later. But I say to my friends in the House, yes, I think there's some need for some regulation and some monitoring of anybody who is selling anything door to door, widgets or gigawatts of power. The bill we have before the House on electrical reform does deal with that as it relates to electrical salespersons, in fact probably takes that further step that is available to anybody now to deal with long-distance telephone marketers at their house.

I'm worried, though, that we will start to table resolutions and pass resolutions here in this House that will start to curtail competition, because in the absence of competition we're going to get a monopoly environment in electrical business and a monopoly environment in any retail business that never proves to be beneficial to the taxpayer and the consumer. We have to be careful not to take that further step, and for that reason I'm afraid I'm not going to be able to support the resolution that's standing in the member's name. But I do want to encourage him to join with me and support the bills before the House that actually take a lot of what he has in his resolution and turn it into effective legislation and regulation to deal with those who are around the streets of this province perhaps being a bit too aggressive in plying their trade in the electrical sales business.

I will now sit down and pass the floor to the opposition.

Mr Bradley: I'm going to speak in favour of this resolution. If there's one problem that is really coming to prominence in communities across Ontario, including St Catharines and the Niagara region, it is people who are

trying to scam consumers in this province over the issue of electrical power.

The resolution calls for the Ontario government to conduct an immediate review of the conduct of electricity retailers in this province. I can't think of anybody who would not want to see this resolution passed.

Some time ago Dalton McGuinty advanced a program which I thought was very useful in protecting consumers. It said the following: that they should direct the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, to aggressively investigate complaints about unfair electricity contracts and cancel contracts signed as a result of unfair sales pitches, find and suspend the licences of electricity retailers using unfair practices, place a moratorium on all further electricity retailing until consumers are given an accurate representation of what they now pay for electricity so they can make clear, apples-to-apples comparisons of the prices being offered by retailers. The OEB has drafted a standard contract to be used by all electricity retailers that eliminates the fine print and spells out the total cost. That's what we need while that moratorium is in place. And direct the OEB to launch an effective, non-partisan public education campaign that tells consumers what to look for and be careful of when signing electricity contracts. Of course, the government's inaction on this front is particularly alarming, given the fact that its own electricity retailing company, a wholly owned subsidiary of Hydro One, has been operating under the misleading name of Ontario Hydro Energy and has been engaging in these questionable practices.

Seniors are being told their hydro will be disconnected if they don't sign the contract being presented to them. There have actually been forgeries of signatures taking place and misrepresentations by the company involved. Electricity retailers are engaging in that kind of forgery, misleading vulnerable people, lying about the nature of the contracts being signed and, in the vernacular, ripping off the consumers of the province.

Here's what I think consumers should know—and this information should be available to them: does the retailer have a licence from the Ontario Energy Board; what is the price per kilowatt hour of the electricity being offered, and how does it compare with the offerings of other retailers; is a fixed price subject to change in the future; how long is the contract, and can it be cancelled or changed; are there penalties involved in cancelling or changing; and can you purchase green or renewable power with the contract? Of course, the advice is do not show retailers your existing electricity bills until you have agreed to sign a contract with the company. If you choose to sign with a retailer, you have to ask, as well, is the power supply guaranteed?

This government, for months and months, simply closed its eyes to this particular problem while we in the opposition raised these issues. At my constituency office I've heard from a number of consumers who are bewildered, frankly, with the tactics that are being used by individuals who are representing electricity retailers.

If there's one area where we have a responsibility as elected representatives, it is to protect consumers, protect

the public we represent from this kind of fraudulent, misleading activity that can cost them in the long run. I feel particularly sorry for people who are perhaps in bad health, the extremely elderly and so on, who are being badgered by these electricity retailers to sign contracts that would be unwise for them to sign.

I am very supportive of this resolution. I hope that all members of the House will vote for it. It makes good common sense, and in the long run it will help protect electricity consumers in Ontario.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure to have a few minutes to join in the debate on Mr Brown's resolution.

Since May 1, we've had the opening of the electricity market, and it's generally gone pretty smoothly. Since the market opened we've seen the price of electricity go from the regulated 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour to pretty much averaging around 3 cents per kilowatt hour for the whole month of May. That's been good news; the price is down. It's a 30% drop in the price of electricity since the market opened. I think we can all be very pleased with that.

But of course with a competitive market, as the summer heats up, there is the risk that prices will go up as demand goes up, and if one of the large generating plants has problems or goes off-line, there's certainly a possibility that prices would go up. That's why there's a role to be played by retailers who are selling fixed-price contracts for those people that want to take the risk out of the market. Very much like you make a decision when you go to the bank for a mortgage as to whether you borrow money at prime plus one or two—or whatever the banks are lending at—or whether you decide you don't want to take that risk and you want to lock in at a fixed price for five years, retailers allow the electricity customers to do just that.

1150

But I'd like to point out that many of the concerns expressed in this resolution, the ideas such as "introduce a standard contract used by all electricity retailers, forcing retailers to provide 'apples to apples' price comparisons to protect consumers," are covered in Bill 58, which was just introduced last week in the Legislature. If Bill 58 is passed by this Legislature, consumer protection measures would be even tougher. The bill would enact a new energy consumers' bill of rights which would place new requirements on gas and electricity retailers dealing with consumers, including giving government the authority to prescribe the content presentation of contracts, to ensure that important information is presented clearly and factually to the consumer, very much like what Mr Brown is asking for. It prohibits other unfair practices. It prohibits false advertising. The bill would provide for the Ontario Energy Board to have new enforcement powers, such as enhanced powers through order compliance and the power to order administrative penalties for these new offences.

The bill also enhances a consumer's cancellation rights—I think this is very important—after signing a contract. The existing 10-day right to cancel would be

replaced with a 30-day right to cancel. The contract would only be effective if the customer reaffirmed it. The negative renewal option would no longer be an option. The customer has to renew it.

Bill 58 is addressing many of these concerns, and if it's approved by this House, the consumers would be further protected.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I'm pleased to join the discussion about my colleague Mike Brown's private member's resolution. Let me begin by saying that I will be supporting the resolution, as I support any meaningful initiative that strengthens consumer protection and strengthens the government's ability to review the conduct of electricity retailers in the province.

All of us know and have stories about retail scam, fraud, call it what you will. One of our members has had his name forged twice, and the matter is under criminal investigation. Hundreds of contracts have been signed in my community by people over the course of the last two years, and I must say, it's unfortunate that we have not had the resources available to assist people in these decisions leading up until now.

The government has, in my view, a relatively weak bill before this House that does not have, in the opinion of the official opposition, Dalton McGuinty, the kind of teeth or commitments needed to protect consumers from the types of unscrupulous practices that have been going on. I should say that, while these practices are offensive by their nature—one cannot cast aspersions on all retailers. But there are significant enough examples, particularly in the rural, eastern and northern parts of the province, that the resolution that Mr Brown has put before us today merits our serious attention and concern. Moreover, it ought to have been done by the government probably a year or two ago. Many of these contracts are signed and they are a fait accompli. Therefore, a review of these retailers and their practices up until now is logical, regardless of what you think of the bill introduced to this House this week.

The whole issue of hydro privatization, the whole question around this complex matter, has been the focus of much debate in the Legislature this month and frankly is the focus of considerable debate in communities across the province. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have laid out the only clear, consistent alternative to the Conservative package. We oppose the privatization of Hydro One. We support competition in the generation of hydro. We do believe and support initiatives that will see strengthened consumer protection.

It's interesting. Oftentimes when we ask questions about these contracts, we're told, "Have them call the OEB," as we heard the Minister of Energy say the other day. Well, just try to get through to the OEB. Try to get a human being to take a phone call, let alone to do an investigation on a case-by-case basis. On the limited number of concerns that have been raised by various members of our caucus, one can only conclude there are tens of thousands of people out there who could benefit from the provisions outlined in Mr Brown's resolution. It

affects seniors mostly. In my riding I get called all the time by senior citizens saying, "What do you advise we do?" I tell them what I think they should do, and that is, don't sign something you're not comfortable with, because once you're signed on, that's it.

I support this resolution. I hope the House will as well. It's appropriate and timely.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes to reply.

Mr Brown: I want to express my appreciation to the members for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Sarnia-Lambton, Beaches-East York, Mississauga Centre, St Catharines, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Windsor-St Clair for providing advice on this resolution.

I say to the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, this motion has nothing to do with the retailing of electricity. I support a retail market in electricity. However, I do not think it is appropriate to have door-to-door sales or telephone solicitation of that. So don't confuse the two issues.

What this resolution is asking, at least in that particular section, is, do you think the people of Ontario want a door-to-door salesman appearing at suppertime, breakfast time, lunchtime or when you're on your way to the shower? Do you want some person coming to your door to sell a product you didn't know you needed to buy, other than through what you were already doing? Is that what it was about? Do you believe that you and Ontarians want people to phone at 5 or 6 o'clock, just as you're sitting down to supper, and getting you up from your dinner?

If you are in favour of those kinds of intrusive practices, vote against this resolution. If you think the public would be better served by rational discussion of how to deal with this matter, vote for it.

The Acting Speaker: The time for private members' public business has expired.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS
EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, 2002
LOI DE 2002
SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'EMPLOI
DES POMPIERS VOLONTAIRES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 47. Mr Arnott has moved second reading of Bill 30. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There will be a five-minute bell and we will delay that bell until after we have considered the next resolution.

ELECTRICITY CONTRACTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 48. Mr Brown has moved

the resolution. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1159 to 1204.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS
EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002
SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'EMPLOI
DES POMPIERS VOLONTAIRES

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 47. Mr Arnott has moved second reading of Bill 30. All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.
Baird, John R.	Gill, Raminder	Munro, Julia
Beaubien, Marcel	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Boyer, Claudette	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Clement, Tony	Hodgson, Chris	Patten, Richard
Coburn, Brian	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Conway, Sean G.	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	McMeekin, Ted	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Bountrogianni, Marie	Levac, David	Sergio, Mario
Bradley, James J.	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Brown, Michael A.	Martel, Shelley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Bryant, Michael	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Caplan, David	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Colle, Mike	McDonald, Al	Wood, Bob
Crozier, Bruce	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David
Duncan, Dwight	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Ecker, Janet	Peters, Steve	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 32; the nays are 28.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'd like you to be here for the next vote.

I also want to address to the gallery that there are absolutely no demonstrations from the gallery. In spite of how we act down here, we don't allow it from you.

I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be referred to committee?

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I would request that the bill be sent to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

The Acting Speaker: Those in favour of the bill being referred to the justice and social policy committee will please rise.

Those opposed will please rise.

A majority is in favour of the bill being referred to the justice and social policy committee.

ELECTRICITY CONTRACTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item 48, private member's resolution 1, standing in the name of Mr Brown.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. There will be 30 seconds for those seeking entrance or egress.

We will now deal with ballot item 48.

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	McDonald, Al
Arnott, Ted	Cunningham, Dianne	McMeekin, Ted
Bountrigianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	O'Toole, John
Boyer, Claudette	Hodgson, Chris	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bradley, James J.	Kormos, Peter	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Levac, David	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Marland, Margaret	Sergio, Mario
Coburn, Brian	Martel, Shelley	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Martiniuk, Gerry	
Conway, Sean G.	Mazzilli, Frank	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Spina, Joseph
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	Stewart, R. Gary
Clement, Tony	Maves, Bart	Tasca, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Sampson, Rob	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 31; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the resolution carried.

This being the completion of private members' business, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1213 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I want to make the House aware today of the leadership of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board in their undertaking to

attempt to help the Eves government understand how its grave underfunding has affected students in the Ottawa area.

The new Premier and the new Deputy Premier pretend they listen and make small overtures to pretend they are fixing problems left by Mike Harris. This particular board has put the government on notice. They will not jeopardize their children's education. This board told the government last year that the funding formula was flawed. Here we go again. To meet the needs of students, the board would have to enter into deficit financing, except that this time there are no reserves to use.

You see, following the minister's directive last year, in implementing a budget they had to use all their reserve funds of \$20 million. This board is not being unreasonable or fiscally irresponsible. They told the new minister the matter is urgent and asked her to appoint a qualified investigator to examine the financial condition of the board immediately.

They can't wait until November. The children can't wait until November. By September, the board won't be able to pay their bills. In the words of the chair of the board, "The time has come to make students a priority." I'm asking the minister to show that students are a priority for her and grant an additional \$32.5 million in emergency funding to this school board. I'm asking her to appoint the investigator the board has asked for, so that she will finally understand the real effects her government cuts are having on our school children in the Ottawa area.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Regions and communities across this province have been enduring and suffering serious and dramatic physician shortages. Niagara region and its communities are among the hardest hit. The shortage of physicians has dramatically worsened in the seven years since the Tories have been in power here at Queen's Park.

A couple of weeks ago I met with Aggie Emerson and Nancy Dmytrow Bilboe, members of the Welland medical recruitment committee. They explained to me the efforts that are being undertaken on behalf of the residents of the community of Welland, which are similar to efforts on behalf of residents in other communities in Niagara. They detailed for me some of the incredible bureaucratic bungling, hurdles and red tape this government persists in maintaining for doctors who do want to come here from other jurisdictions to practise medicine.

This government is directly responsible for the worsening doctor shortage. I've written to the Minister of Health, Tony Clement. I've asked him to please meet with members of the Welland medical recruitment committee. Let them submit to Mr Clement, the Minister of Health, detailed explanations and examples of the types of hurdles that exist that prohibit doctors who want to come to Ontario, and they've got real-life examples as illustrations. They're prepared to work with

the Minister of Health to help solve the problem; the Minister of Health persists in maintaining and worsening the problem.

ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to honour all the men and women who fought for our freedom 58 years ago today. The beginning of the end of the war in Europe started on a blustery day on the coast of Normandy, where thousands of British, Canadian and American troops stormed ashore in the early morning hours of June 6, 1944. Fighting their way off the beaches amid a hail of bullets, they managed to hold a beachhead, despite desperate German attempts to dislodge them. In less than one year the Second World War would be over.

Several Georgina residents took part in the invasion, and their sacrifices, along with those who served in Canada's armed forces, were recognized on Saturday and Sunday with the annual candlelight tribute at Briar Hill Cemetery in Sutton in my riding of York North.

Sam Doggart, veteran of the bloody fighting in Europe, spearheaded the campaign. The Georgina Guides, Scouts and Cadets mark the graves of servicemen and women in the cemetery with a Canadian flag. Later, a lighted candle is placed on each grave, burning throughout the night and into the next day, Sunday.

Mr Doggart has extended his campaign this year to include Fenelon Falls, Aurora, Newmarket and Vaughan. Local church groups have also been given flags and candles to place on the graves of veterans in their church cemeteries.

This program not only pays tribute to the sacrifices of Canada's fallen soldiers, but also instills in the young people taking part "the traditions of sacrifice made to keep freedom alive."

CANCER SCREENING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): More than three years have now passed since an expert panel from Cancer Care Ontario, funded by the Ministry of Health, presented its report on screening for colorectal cancer. The expert panel recommended that a screening program be put in place for individuals over 50. That recommendation was supported by the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons, the Ontario Association of Gastroenterology and the Ontario Association of Pathologists. Yet three years later there is still no screening program in place and no one is saying why. Why is the saving of a life not worth the investment in a \$20 test?

Earlier this week the Ontario Association of Radiologists released a study on waiting times for diagnostic tests. It was shocking to see that in 75% of the hospitals surveyed, people have to wait more than two weeks for a barium enema fluoroscopy, a test that is used to diagnose suspected colorectal cancer. In 25% of those hospitals,

people are waiting eight to 10 weeks to find out if they have cancer and should start treatments.

Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cancer killer for both men and women in Ontario, and Ontario has one of the highest rates of colorectal cancer in the world. More than 6,000 Ontarians are diagnosed with colorectal cancer every year, and every year more than 2,000 Ontarians die from it. It doesn't need to be happening. The probability of curing colorectal cancer is 90% when it is caught early. It is absolutely essential that the government act now to save lives. They should implement the screening program recommended by Cancer Care Ontario three years ago, and they should ensure people don't have to wait weeks to get the tests that will determine whether they need treatment.

ANNIVERSARY OF D-DAY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): On behalf of my constituents in Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, it is my honour today to mark the 58th anniversary of D-Day. All in all, Canada contributed a fifth of the fighting troops assaulting the German defences that day. The ships of the Royal Canadian Navy and the bombers and fighters of the Royal Canadian Air Force were in the forefront of the forces guarding the invasion troops and softening up the German defences.

I want to pay special tribute to the three platoons of our own Lorne Scots regiment who went ashore and made Brampton and Canada proud that day. In 1944 Canada carried its weight among the international community, unlike today.

I was pleased to see that the Minister of Veterans Affairs announced federal funding of \$1 million to the Juno Beach Centre Association. This will assist in the establishment of the Juno Beach Centre in Normandy, France. The centre should be ready by next year. I say, it's about time. There isn't a Canadian memorial that marks these achievements anywhere. Sometimes it seems to me that the only part of military history the federal government has bothered to preserve is those 40-year-old flying death traps they call Sea King helicopters.

Canadians and free people everywhere owe our veterans more than can be repaid. I speak for everyone in Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale when I thank and remember those brave soldiers, sailors and airmen.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The report of the select committee on alternative fuels provides an excellent road map for the government of Ontario to drastically reduce our dependency on non-renewable, polluting fossil fuels and replace them with clean, renewable energy sources.

Unfortunately, to implement the far-reaching recommendations, the Eves government would have to completely reverse its energy and environment policies and bring them into the 21st century. Evidence of this is

found in the shocking and unbelievable answers that Environment Minister Chris Stockwell gave to my question regarding the conversion of dirty, pollution-laden, coal-fired electric generating stations operated by Ontario Power Generation, of which his government is supposed to have complete control, to natural gas.

When asked to implement the recommendations of the alternative fuels committee report, the minister, in full rant mode, looking to his own members and the press gallery for approval, replied that "the only way he wants to get up to number one is to close down all our infrastructure, close down all our plants, close down all our manufacturing and lay everybody off and put them on welfare."

If anyone believes that the minister and the Eves government have any stomach for implementing the progressive, imaginative, comprehensive and far-reaching recommendations of the alternative fuels committee report, he would be dreaming in Technicolor.

This government has made enormous, damaging cuts to the Ministry of the Environment, allows the dirtiest gas in Canada to be sold in Ontario, looks the other way while polluting industries belch out pollutants and has abandoned public transit and refused to promote energy conservation.

1340

GOLDEN JUBILEE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): As a proud Canadian of British origin, I am pleased to rise today in order to mark the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Only four previous monarchs have achieved this milestone.

The past 50 years have marked vast change, but throughout that time there has been one constant: the dignity, grace and leadership of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

It was an ordinary Wednesday in 1952 when Princess Elizabeth, who was in Kenya at the time, ascended to the throne on the death of her father, King George VI. Following the funeral of King George VI and the 16-week period of court mourning, there was opportunity for celebration the following year with the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey on June 2, 1953. I remember that day well.

From the earliest days of her reign, the Queen took up her new role with energetic commitment. Taking up her duties as head of the Commonwealth in earnest, the Queen embarked on a series of overseas visits, including Canada. As head of the diverse nations of the Commonwealth, Queen Elizabeth has taught us many lessons about the importance of respecting the diversity within our own population here in Canada. Since those early days 50 years ago, the Queen has travelled the world and paid many visits to Canada.

On behalf of all members of this House, I extend our very best wishes to the Queen on the occasion of her Golden Jubilee. God save the Queen.

LEGAL AID

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I want to speak to the legal aid crisis that Ontario is currently going through. The failure to increase legal aid tariffs over the past 15 years has meant that many communities across this province do not have counsel providing legal aid work, even though demand is increasing across the province.

The people who suffer are all of those single moms, kids, Ontarians who need access to justice, particularly on family law matters, and they're not getting it. At the same time, this failure to increase legal aid tariffs further disadvantages low-income Ontarians.

The Chief Justice of Canada, Beverley McLachlin, stated recently, "Providing legal aid to low-income Canadians is an essential public service.... The well-being of our justice system ... and the public's confidence in it ... depend on it. If legal aid fails, justice fails."

Yet in Ottawa, Brantford, Owen Sound, Kingston, London, Sault Ste Marie, Toronto, Brockville, Hamilton, Peterborough, St Catharines and other communities, legal aid services are being withdrawn because the government refuses to respond to Legal Aid Ontario and Legal Aid Ontario coalition submissions just to update the legal aid tariffs.

It's about access to justice, and our entire justice system depends on it. It's time for the government to update legal aid tariffs in Ontario.

RANDY HOSACK

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): I rise today to recognize the passing of an outstanding public servant, Randy Hosack. I wish to extend sincere condolences on behalf of the Honourable Bob Runciman, Minister of Public Safety and Security, and myself to Mr Hosack's family, friends and co-workers.

Mr Hosack served the public in the Ministry of Correctional Services for 34 years, and he was deputy superintendent at Sprucedale Youth Centre in Simcoe. Mr Hosack was actually due to retire on July 1 of this year, after a very accomplished career. Indeed, he was described by his colleagues as the cornerstone of Sprucedale.

His family, friends and colleagues numbered in the hundreds at the memorial service held on the grounds of Sprucedale over the weekend to honour him and to pay their respects to his wife, Pat; his son, Paul, who is a lawyer in Simcoe; and his grandson, Brock.

On behalf of Minister Runciman, I would like to express my gratitude for his many years of service to the people of this province. Deputy Superintendent Hosack served our province well. He touched the lives of many people, colleagues and especially the youth who now collectively mourn his passing.

The fine career of Mr Hosack is what excellence in public service is all about. Randy Hosack exemplified an outstanding public servant. He was an inspiration to many and will be truly missed.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 90, An Act to promote the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste / Projet de loi 90, Loi visant à promouvoir la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1346 to 1351.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Baird, John R.	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Maves, Bart	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Ecker, Janet	McDonald, Al	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Tsubouchi, David H.
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hastings, John	O'Toole, John	Wood, Bob
Hodgson, Chris	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Young, David
Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	McMeekin, Ted
Boyer, Claudette	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Levac, David	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 41; the nays are 23.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we get down to question period, the members may know this is

the last day for our pages. I'm sure all members would like to join me in thanking our pages on the last day. So on behalf of all the members, we want to thank the pages for the great and terrific work they've done. We've got a fine group of young people here today. I think I speak for all members when I say we wish them well in their endeavours. Some may be back here some day in another capacity.

VISITORS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: I'm sure this assembly would want to know that page Daniel Webster is joined today by his mother Beth Webster and his brothers Chris, Mikey and J.P. in the visitors' gallery.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Today the Provincial Auditor rang alarm bells about the refurbishment of the Pickering A nuclear plant. In the Provincial Auditor's opening remarks, he made reference to "the publicly reported and significant cost overruns and delays being experienced in restarting the Pickering A nuclear plant." These are his words, not mine. The Provincial Auditor said, "The cost overruns and delays being experienced in restarting Pickering A ... could drive up electricity prices." These are his words, not mine. Aren't you concerned about this?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): Yes, of course.

It's kind of surprising; I thought the first question would be on the auditor's report on Bruce, to be quite honest.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): We ask the questions. Just answer them, Chris.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm doing my best. I don't want to try to organize the question period agenda for you, but I'm kind of surprised, considering they were on the record about what a terrible deal Bruce was. I guess today the auditor came in and said no, it wasn't such a terrible deal, so now you're asking us about Pickering.

Am I to conclude, since you were opposed to us moving forward on leasing Bruce, that now that you have the auditor's report saying it's not a bad thing, you think we should move forward and maybe lease Pickering as well? I'm just kind of curious.

Mr Bryant: So today you're concerned about Pickering A, right? Ontario Power Generation has driven a refurbishment of Pickering A \$1.5 billion over budget. It's months behind and \$1.5 billion over budget. You say you're concerned about it. But yesterday you said of the

president of the company that did this, Ontario Power Generation, "I think he's done a good job." Good job? Over budget by \$1.5 billion? I ask the energy minister what he would have to do to do a bad job?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm getting the impression that you'd like us to do with Pickering what we did with Bruce. I'm kind of surprised, because I recall very clearly that you guys were opposed to what we did leasing out Bruce. You said it was a terrible deal for the taxpayer—awful, awful. I'm kind of surprised that now you're standing up and saying, "Pickering is a problem." Would you be suggesting to us, "Gee, you guys were very bright when you went and leased out Bruce. You did a great job on the Bruce issue. We got jobs, investment, prosperity and power on the grid." Maybe you're seeing your way clear to why we should be in government, because we had the foresight to make that deal. Are you thinking now that maybe we should do the same thing at Pickering as we did at Bruce? Because if you're saying that, it's a complete reversal of your previous position; some would even suggest a flip-flop.

Mr Bryant: In 2002, Ron "Good Job" Osborne received over half a million dollars in additional compensation for long-term performance. He gets half a million dollars as a bonus in 2002 for running Pickering A \$1.5 billion over budget. He got a \$500,000 bonus to run a company \$1.5 billion over budget, just on Pickering A to date. What do you have to do not to get a bonus? What do you have to do? Will you review this half a million dollars in additional compensation for long-term performance in light of the fact that the Provincial Auditor has raised these concerns which you apparently share?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm making headway. They've finally realized it was a long-term bonus. We've made headway. It's taken three days to go from annual income. They've backed off that a little bit. Today they finally admit it's a long-term bonus spread over three years. We're making yards here.

In response to the question, that long-term bonus is applied over three years. The long-term bonus continues again for the next three years. If Pickering doesn't meet the standards set down by the board, there is no bonus. That's how the process works. So the good thing about this is that when you run a good company and you make money, you can make a bonus. If Pickering doesn't meet its targets, if Pickering goes over, there's no bonus there. That's how it works. That's how it makes sense. But I feel relieved, vindicated that after two days you finally understand it's a long-term bonus.

1400

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is for the Minister of Energy. It has to do with the issue of Hydro One and how the government got us in this position. I want to go back to 1999, when Hydro One was established. The government hand-picked the board,

and I remember the proud announcement of the board appointments. The Premier at that time was the Deputy Premier. I assume that the board understood the direction the government wanted to head in.

My question is this: when the government appointed the Hydro One board, did they have clear direction from the government of where you wanted to take Hydro One, and did you get assurance from the board that they would follow that direction?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): Being the Minister of Energy for I think six or seven weeks, and the appointments took place, I would suggest, in 1999, which was over three years ago, I can't personally respond to the question with respect to clear direction. I would suggest to you, though, that when you hand-pick a board—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I guess we've got cackling from the member.

We would appoint a board. I would presume that they had meetings with the people involved and there would be some direction. I would imagine that direction was given, yes.

Mr Phillips: I would have thought that when the decision was made to fire these people, due diligence was done, that a responsible minister would have gone back and reviewed the record. According to your predecessor, Mr Wilson, the problem with the board goes way back. He says that every time we expressed abhorrence, they would increase the exit package. In other words, 18 months ago or two years ago the board was deliberately disobeying the direction of the shareholder, represented by the government. Every time Mr Wilson would raise his concern about the abhorrent salaries, they would do the opposite and head in the other direction.

The taxpayers, the public of Ontario, would expect, if that were the case, that the government would send them a letter, that the government would put on the record to the board, "We disagree with this. We find this abhorrent and we insist that you stop." There would be minutes of meetings between Mr Wilson—and I gather he met regularly with the chair. My question to you is this: if the board was deliberately disobeying the government, the taxpayers and was acting in an abhorrent fashion, will you table today the communications that the government, on behalf of the taxpayers, sent to the board telling them that this was unacceptable?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Since being Minister of Energy, I have had a very short period of time in dealing with this board. My experience is that in fact they acted unilaterally, without discussing things with me, without informing me. Clearly, May 17 is a perfectly good example. Therefore, as Minister of Energy, I sent a letter directing them to do certain things that they didn't do. I then said, "Well, they're not going to do it. I know I can count on my opposition members in this House to support a bill brought in to remove this board of directors." The only mistake I made was in expecting opposition members to be on the side of the taxpayers. They're not, so I have to

count on my friends on this side of the House to represent taxpayers. When we did send the letter, when we did make a move, all you two have done is obstruct the protectionist legislation we put in for the taxpayers. Shame on you. A decision was taken. You're obstructing it.

Mr Phillips: We're dealing with an extremely serious matter, one of the province's most valued assets. We're dealing with a government that hand-picked these people, that told us they were overseeing them as they made decisions. The minister, on behalf of the government, said that he met regularly with them. He told us that there was abhorrent behaviour. I say to you, Minister, that you have a responsibility. If in fact this board was disobeying the directions of the government, I'm asking you today to table the evidence of their disregard of Mr Wilson's direction on salaries, where he has accused the board of disobeying the government months ago, well before you were. I'm challenging you today, table the evidence of what Mr Wilson did to bring this board in line that was clearly, he is saying—not the board but he said they disregarded and didn't follow his direction. Table that evidence.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I challenge the member opposite, why don't you do the right thing, why don't you stand up for the taxpayers? You spent weeks and weeks and weeks challenging this government and the board of directors. I challenge the members opposite, why don't you do the right thing? You know the people in your ridings are telling you to do the right thing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Too loud. Minister.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I challenge you members to do the right thing. A bill was tabled in this House to correct the circumstances surrounding the Hydro One board. You have one of two options: you can side with Sir Graham Day and the board of directors of Hydro One or you can side with the good people of Ontario. We're with the good people of Ontario, and apparently you're with Sir Graham Day.

BRUCE NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, you repeatedly say that the reason your government wants to privatize our hydro is so you can pay down Hydro's debt. But the Provincial Auditor said today that after you privatized the Bruce nuclear plant you lost \$215 million in payments on the debt in the first year alone. The auditor says that in future years less money will be available to pay down Hydro's debt because British Energy gets to keep all the profits. Deputy Premier, how is your privatization deal good for hydro ratepayers when it cost the people \$214 million in the first year alone?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'll refer that to the Minister of Finance.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): This is not only a good deal for Ontario taxpayers, this is a very good deal for Ontario electricity users and a very good deal for the community that this plant is located in. Not only did we get a \$370-million upfront payment, we also have new power coming on stream; new power that's coming on stream at lower cost.

We have more jobs in this community. Perhaps the honourable member from the NDP doesn't think that saving a thousand jobs is worth an investment by this government. Perhaps the honourable member doesn't think that 260 brand new jobs—unionized jobs, which I would think the honourable member from the third party might appreciate—are worth the investment and the decision that this government made to lease the Bruce plant.

Mr Hampton: Well, Minister, the auditor also points out that that loss of payment on the debt is going to continue year after year after year. He points out that when you examine the Bruce nuclear deal, and you look at it over that period of time, it is a huge loss in terms of debt payments, something your government always talks about. That means the people of the province have to pick it up through higher hydro rates. Why are those debt payments not being made? Because your corporate friends, your buddies, the pockets that you want to pad, get to keep all of the money. Admit it, Minister, the Provincial Auditor blew the whistle on you today. This isn't a good deal on debt payment. This isn't a good deal for hydro ratepayers. This is simply a good deal for your privatized friends.

1410

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate that the Provincial Auditor is looking at simple accounting facts. If you want to make all government decisions based on what accountants tell you to do, you can do that, but I would advise that that is not a good government.

In this community we have jobs which we were not going to have. We have over \$1 billion of investment in this plant and \$15 million a year of economic investment in this community. The honourable member likes to say there are not going to be payments on the debt. Well, if the plant wasn't operating, if there were no profits, if there were no jobs, if there was no power, of course there aren't going to be payments on the debt, but that is not the case.

Mr Hampton: The minister should read the report, because the auditor compares what Ontario people would have gotten if we'd kept it and continued to run it. He says we would get more. Then he looks at what you get when you privatize it to British Energy.

The argument you use for privatizing Hydro One is the same. You say that if you privatize Hydro One, it will allow you to pay money down on the debt. But the auditor blew the whistle on you today. He says that the retained earnings are worth more, that by giving up the profits, giving up the retained earnings, you actually benefit your private sector friends and you punish the people of Ontario.

Admit it, Minister, the auditor blew the whistle on you today. Your privatization deals benefit the private sector and cost the hydro ratepayers more money—this year, next year and every year into the future.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I hate to break it to the honourable member—and perhaps it's because he's a member of the NDP that he doesn't understand this—but you can only have retained earnings when you have earnings. This plant was not going to be operating. This plant was not going to be producing electricity for Ontario electricity users.

The taxpayers have not borne the risk of the increased investment to get this plant going. We have \$1.2 billion of investment going into that plant. We have 1,000 jobs in that community—good jobs. We have 50 young people every year who are getting an opportunity to apprentice, to learn, to have good careers in the nuclear energy system. We have \$15 million of economic activity in that community every year. Maybe the honourable member thinks that's not worth the decision we made, but for that community, for Ontario taxpayers, for Ontario electricity users, it was a good deal.

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy and it concerns the Pickering nuclear station. The auditor went out of his way today to point out that the Pickering nuclear station is severely behind time in terms of its maintenance and renewal projects and it is over \$1 billion over budget. In other words, there's a real problem there. Yet we note that you're paying the head of Ontario Power Generation \$1.5 million in salary and even more in bonuses. Minister, can you tell me why you increase someone's salary when they're obviously doing such a bad job?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): I don't believe his salary was increased. I believe the salary has been fairly consistent over the past three years. I don't know where you come to the conclusion that his salary was increased. If you're speaking about the long-term bonus that my friend from St Paul's understood finally today—after three days—that is over the previous three years.

I can only suggest to you that if Pickering—

Mr Hampton: Yes? Yes? Yes?

Hon Mr Stockwell: He has awoken from his dream sequence.

If I can just put it to you in a short answer, Pickering is of concern, but the good thing about the Pickering plant is that it wasn't included in our adequacy reports. We're trying to get it on stream as quickly as possible. It will reduce the price of hydro.

The adequacy reports as done by the IMO didn't include Pickering and it's considered we have an adequate supply of hydro, of power over the next few years. So all I can tell you is that was included. I understand the auditor spoke to the fact that he's concerned. Let's be

clear. The auditor just said he was concerned. He also said that he hasn't audited the books, that he hasn't looked at any of the finances, so it was a very, very qualified statement.

Mr Hampton: The auditor today went out of his way to say there's a serious problem at Pickering, and he went out of his way to say there is a significant risk of hydro price increases because of what has happened at Pickering and elsewhere. Before you became the government, the president of Ontario Hydro was paid about \$500,000. You became the government and you bump up Mr Osborne's salary to \$1.5 million plus bonuses. The auditor comes out today and says this guy is failing at his job in a way that can significantly hurt the people of Ontario. The president of Hydro-Québec has a salary of \$500,000. The president of BC Hydro has a salary of less than \$500,000. You've got one of your executives, who the auditor says is a failure, and you think he deserves a pay increase to \$1.5 million. Tell us how you defend that.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It really does beg the question of how you defended the salary you paid Maurice Strong, the maharishi. How you defend that salary—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It didn't start out as a dollar, my friend. It started out as a million dollars. That's what it started out as. Then you found out he was so bad you cut him down to a buck because he was buying rainforest land in Costa Rica. That's what your leader did at Hydro, and ran up huge debt and let the rates increase and continued to push up the debt further and further. The fact of the matter is that Mr Osborne has done a good job in the previous three years of organizing OPG. Let's be clear. If there are losses so that they don't meet certain requirements, certain measurements, then there will be no bonus at all. He's already said there is no long-term bonus next year; he's not getting anything. So the fact is these are tied to performance. In the previous three years they performed well. If there's a point in Pickering, which we didn't count in the adequacy report, if it isn't proved to be effective and brought on stream reasonably well and financially on budget, there's no bonus at all. That's how it works. I say to the member of the third party, there isn't a bonus, so we're not paying a bonus. That bonus you talked about was over the previous three years.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Minister of Energy. It's about who knew what and when in the government when it comes to the compensation package of Captain Clitheroe and the crew of Hydro One. Today there seems to be a bit of a mix-up out there, which maybe you can clarify in here. You had said you first informed the Premier of the executive compensation packages of the executive officers of Hydro One in April. But then today the Premier said that the first time he became aware of this was May 16. There's a wire story running that says Stockwell insisted yesterday that you

personally told the Premier in April about the compensation. Who is telling the truth? Did you tell him in April or did you tell him in May?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): I know the member is a lawyer, so he's a good detail guy, I presume. I think he should check the details of that story. Just look at the story. Do you notice any quotations around that? There are no quotations around that quote because I never said it. I absolutely never said that. You will know that the reporter who is reporting this—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm doing my best to respond. It's hard to ask and answer the questions at the same time. I'm doing my best to respond. If you want to look at that story, you might note that it is not in quotations. I never said that, never intimated that and that story is completely and factually inaccurate. It's not good journalism. The only thing that's protecting him is he didn't put it in quotes. You know why? Because I never said it.

1420

Mr Bryant: I've got a couple of questions. Why did you not tell the Premier? Why did you sit on this information and not tell the Premier? You're the Minister of Energy. The Premier has said he is outraged by the executive compensation, absolutely outraged. You say you're outraged by the executive compensation and yet you sat on that information. One day your story is that you told him in April; today you're telling us that you told him in May.

There's this doctrine of deniability over there. We've got speak-no-evil Wilson, we've got see-no-evil Eves, and we've got hear-no-evil Stockwell, who walks into the ministry and says to everybody, "For goodness' sake don't tell me about what happened before I got appointed. I don't want to have to answer it in the House." When are you going to tell people what's going on? Answer the questions. Stop ducking. Rip off the veil of secrecy. What have you got to hide? Give us some answers. Why was this government asleep at the switch while Hydro One sank the electricity transmission highway? What have you got to hide?

Hon Mr Stockwell: You notice he didn't quote the story, because he knows it wasn't in quotations. Now he has changed directions and the supplementary question is completely different. I'll accept that as some kind of withdrawal on the first part.

The second part, with respect to informing the Premier: I informed the Premier. We decided we were going to deal with this—

Interjection: When?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I informed the Premier some time after—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Stockwell: This is hilarious from this opposition party. They had their own leader standing up

here on December 12 telling us he's in favour of privatizing transmission. You've got nerve across the floor. Then he said, "Oh, no, I was thinking too quickly, and when I think too quickly, I say things I shouldn't say." Now you're challenging us over here. How do we know when your leader is thinking too quickly and when he's thinking, as he normally does, too slowly?

PETERBOROUGH REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): We heard about Andy and Opie earlier this week. I'm going to talk about Aunt Bea.

My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. On Tuesday, June 4, the member from Windsor West held a press conference and released a communiqué that contained erroneous information about the hospital in my riding, the Peterborough Regional Health Centre. The member opposite claimed that waiting times for radiology services are increasing and our government has done nothing to address this problem. Once again the member and her Liberal cronies are ill-informed. Minister, you and I know that this indeed is not the situation. Can you please provide the House and residents in my riding with some clarity on this issue?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the question. If I was on the other side of the House, I'd be putting out some pink slips to the fact checkers who work for the Liberal caucus.

The member for Windsor West once again failed to check those facts before making claims against our government and against our health care system in this province. After her erroneous press conference, we were contacted by the Peterborough Regional Health Centre concerning the matter. First, when discussing the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, the member claimed that the waiting lists for nuclear medicine and cardiac procedures were 10 weeks long. If she'd taken the time to do any research on her own, she soon would have realized that Peterborough Regional does not even offer the procedure. They're not even in that business. It's a non-hospital procedure conducted through a medical clinic.

The member for Windsor West also claimed that residents of Peterborough have obscene wait times for radiology services and so on. Officials from Peterborough Regional have assured us, just as they have assured the community, that each and every emergency or urgent-care patient requiring imaging will receive that treatment within 24 hours. The member opposite should stop fearmongering and—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr Stewart: It's unfortunate the member isn't here today. I hope she's somewhere getting some factual research. This is a most unfortunate situation. I believe that communiqué she released is an insult, an insult to the

doctors and the administration of Peterborough Regional Health Centre. I am absolutely aghast at what was said and I'm very disappointed in the member and the way she dealt with this issue. I truly believe that she owes Peterborough Regional Health Centre an apology for not consulting with them before making these accusations. Her arrogance, I believe, is unbelievable. Her lack of concern for health care—

The Speaker: Order. I'm not going to sit here and listen to you attack another member like that. Would you please get to the question? I said earlier in the week that I'm not going to allow personal attacks. You're not going to get up and attack people personally like that in questions. If you do it again, I'm going to cut you off and you're not going to get the question. You now have 10 seconds to wrap it up.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Given the allegations from the honourable member's preamble to his question, I think it's important to inform the House that the communiqué to which he's referring was from the Ontario Association of Radiologists; it was not issued by the member.

The Speaker: You've got 10 seconds to wrap up.

Mr Stewart: It's unfortunate that those comments were made to our doctors in Peterborough. Minister, can you please correct the false information for the member opposite and the residents in my riding?

Hon Mr Clement: It's important to correct the record. This is a serious matter, and some individuals in Peterborough have had their integrity impugned. The real wait times for diagnostic services—the member for Windsor West claimed that the wait list for a barium enema was five weeks; the truth is, for the urgent cases that should be done quickly, it's one week. An ultrasound, seven weeks; in fact, emergency ultrasounds are completed within 24 hours and the less urgent ones are within two weeks. The member claimed that the wait time for a mammogram was six weeks; the truth is that symptomatic mammography is completed in less than 48 hours and semi-urgent are completed within one week. The member claimed that the wait time for CT scans was six weeks; the truth is that emergency CT scans are completed immediately and urgent-care CT scans are completed within four weeks.

These are the facts. This is what is occurring in the community. If the honourable member wants to get elected, that's fine, but stick to the facts.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. Every member in this House has students in their riding who right now are struggling. They're struggling in special education, and there are curriculum casualties that aren't getting their credits because of the actions of this government. There are rural and urban students who are insufficiently recognized.

Regarding these students in trouble, you said on May 9 that a review would start immediately to help them. It's not even action, Minister; you promised to study getting to some action. In the House every week you've referred to this review. I wonder if you could tell us today what the mandate of the review is, who the members of the committee are, how people can reach them, where their office is, how much staff they have and if you could give us the details of what you promised started on May 9 and how it's helping kids in Ontario.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'm very pleased to respond to the member opposite because certainly our government is responding to the concerns of people in the province of Ontario. We put in place a new funding formula, which was introduced in 1998, and we were going to do a review commencing in 2003. However, based on the issues we heard, we felt it was appropriate to move that review up one year. So the review was announced in the throne speech. Dr Rozanski has been appointed to chair that review of the funding formula that is going to take place. I'm very pleased to say, as well, that work has been ongoing in order to ensure that people throughout the province of Ontario, no matter where they live, will have that opportunity to participate. The report will be submitted in November.

1430

Mr Kennedy: Minister, are you talking about issues? There are actually students who are hurting because of your clumsy de-funding formula. If you phone Mordechai Rozanski's office, they won't take your call. If you ask your ministers what the details are, as I did in a briefing, they say nothing has been decided, nothing has been done.

There are three weeks left in the school year. You said, when you were running as a leadership candidate, this would take 90 days to do. That's in the middle of July and you haven't even started yet. Fifty days have gone already. We put forward at the beginning of this week a critical action plan, things you should be doing right now to help students.

Minister, at least admit that you are part of a charade, that they have put you on the front line to try and make it look like something has happened, but nothing has happened. Why not go one better? Why not admit you don't have a plan, take the plan we put forward at the beginning of this week and start to help students right now instead of referring to a review you haven't even had the gumption to get started?

Hon Mrs Witmer: It would be more appropriate if the member opposite would truly focus on doing what is in the best interests of the students in the province of Ontario. What needs to happen is that we lower the temperature and we work together with all stakeholders, whether they are parents or teachers.

Today I have been meeting with teacher groups. I have been meeting with stakeholder groups, There is a lot of work that has been undertaken, and I want to tell the member opposite that we have already responded to the

concerns. We have announced this year, since our government took over, an additional \$350 million; we have introduced an additional \$65 million for textbooks and \$25 million for additional early literacy and early math.

The member opposite should check his facts. Much of the information you provided in your report is fiction. You have drawn the numbers out of thin air. They are not based on any—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Minister, as you know, the Ontario disability support program is intended to meet the needs of people with disabilities and help them become more independent. Recently a number of my constituents who receive ODSP have informed me there hasn't been an increase in ODSP since 1995. Minister, can you tell me what we are doing for Ontarians with disabilities?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I thank my colleague who so ably represents the riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. This government has made changes that were long overdue, something that both the Liberals and the NDP never had the courage to do. They left Ontarians with disabilities languishing on a welfare system that never met their needs.

Our government believes it's important to take steps to make life better for the disabled. So, after listening to Ontarians with disabilities and their advocates, listening to what they have to say, we changed the system. We fulfilled our promise to move people with disabilities off the welfare system into a separate program and we removed the label "permanently unemployable." We protected the benefit rates from the old family benefits program, and in fact the rates for single Ontario disability program support recipients are now the highest among all the provinces.

Mr Miller: I'm happy to hear about the various changes our government has made to assist Ontarians with disabilities; however, some of my constituents and I have concerns for people with disabilities. Will the government consider what more can be done to improve the lives of people with disabilities?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I thank my colleague again. I remind my colleagues here in the House it was this Conservative government that introduced the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, one that neither the Liberals nor the NDP had the courage to introduce.

We know there will always be room for improvement within the ODSP but we have made significant progress. We have removed the label, as I said, of "unemployable" that was used under the former Family Benefits Act. We recognize that people who are disabled can and do want to work. We increased the amount of earnings that a

family can keep without deduction from \$185 under the former FBA to \$235 a month. We've provided a broad range of employment supports to assist people with disabilities to be able to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. We have raised the asset ceiling to \$5,000 for singles, \$7,500 for a couple and \$500 for each dependant.

There are programs now for incentives to participate and for additional—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Today your Premier says he didn't learn about the bloated salaries and bonuses at Hydro One until three weeks ago. But yesterday your Minister of Energy said he personally informed the Premier about the bloated salaries and bonuses in April. The Premier in turn says he can't recall any of that.

Deputy Premier, millions of dollars of potential damages and legal fees are at stake here. We need to know who's telling the truth, the Premier or the Minister of Energy? Would you agree this should go to a legislative committee, so that the Premier can tell his story, the minister can tell his story and we can see who's telling the truth?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'm going to refer that to the Minister of Environment and Energy.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): I'm sorry, I was out of the room, but I think the question was about information with respect to salaries.

I was informed, as I said earlier in this House, seven to 10 days after. I spoke to the Premier about it some time in the second week of May.

Mr Hampton: We're used to the Minister of Energy changing his story. One minute he says the government knew nothing about the bloated salaries, and six days later he stands up and says, "Oh, the government always knew about the bloated salaries." Then the minister says no one from the board told the government about the bloated salaries. You've said all these stories.

What I'm asking your government is, because potentially millions of dollars in damages and millions of dollars in legal fees are at stake, can you send this to a legislative committee so you guys can sort out your story over there?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I've said consistently that I was informed—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I hear the heckling from the professional heckler over there.

My story all along is that seven to 10 days after, I was informed; around the second week of May, I discussed this with the Premier. Shortly after that, he came into the House and told the House I was going to be investigating

the salary components at Hydro One. Then they changed the tune. They ratcheted up the message, and that changed our approach, because they were simply disregarding us as the single shareholder. That's the story.

We don't need a committee to determine what we knew when; we admit it—1999, everybody knew; 2000, everybody knew; 2001, everyone knew. We all know. Those details are out there; they're on the Web site.

Now, if he wants to have a committee to investigate some missing information, where's your letter, Howie? It's been three days since I've seen you. I've asked you to give me that letter, and now—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. I want to ask you about 38-year-old Philip Rennie. He's an autistic man. He has the mental ability of a five- or six-year-old. Mr Rennie was ordered to have a psychiatric assessment. All 18 forensic beds at St Joseph's Hospital were full. As a result, this man, who has the mental ability of a five- or six-year-old boy, spent a week at the Hamilton-Wentworth—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I can't hear the question.

Member for Hamilton East, I'm sorry to interrupt.

Mr Agostino: Thank you, Speaker. This man, who has the mental ability of a five- or six-year-old, spent a week in a jail cell because there was no space at the hospital for him to be assessed in the psychiatric division they have. Minister, you shut down the psychiatric hospital in Hamilton. You promised there would not be a negative impact. The forensic unit continues to be full. Do you think it's appropriate in Ontario today for this man, with the mental ability of a five- or six-year-old who needs a psychiatric assessment ordered by the courts, to spend a week isolated in a jail cell because there was no room in the forensic unit of the psychiatric hospital in Hamilton?

1440

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for bringing the individual facts to my attention. I won't deal with an individual case.

I can tell this assembly that mental health funding, in terms of an envelope of spending by this government, topped \$2.64 billion, including close to \$700 million for hospital-based services. We are seeking from the mental health implementation task forces their recommendations on how best to provide community-based care in the wake of deinstitutionalization which, I take it, every member of this House agrees with, or certainly the caucuses of this House agree with, that deinstitutionalization is in fact preferable. We have to get the community supports in place, but in the meantime the expenditures and the commitment by this government are there.

Mr Agostino: Minister, you're obviously on the wrong briefing note because that had nothing to do with the question I asked. The reality is this: what happened in this situation is common across Ontario. In many situations, because of your cuts, the psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric beds—people who belong in psychiatric divisions are ending up in jail cells right across Ontario. St Joseph's Hospital has asked for 18 more forensic psychiatric beds. There is your answer. Your ministry has not responded. So all this cute little verbal—for lack of a better word—that we just received from the minister does absolutely nothing to help the situation.

Again, a man with the mental ability of a five- or six-year-old spent the week in a jail cell. That is not uncommon. That is happening across Ontario today. You've been asked for 18 more additional forensic beds in the unit at St Joseph's Hospital. Will you commit today to providing those beds and ensuring that what happened to this man will never happen to anyone else across Ontario, and commit yourself to reviewing the situations of psychiatric beds across Ontario and how many people who should be in hospitals are in jail cells because of your neglect and inaction?

Hon Mr Clement: I can certainly tell this House that since the election of 1995 there have been 446 new forensic beds that have opened across this province, and another 144 beds to go. Since 1995 we've added an additional \$377 million in mental health care services at the community level, including \$23.5 million for the community investment funding for case management, \$60 million in total for additional mental health beds and increased community-based services, and \$23.9 million for phase 1 of our mental health homelessness initiative. Those are just a few of the items. So in the wake of that, the investments have been there.

Now we have to make sure we have a comprehensive program for community-based care that is to replace institutionalization, and this government is in favour of that.

ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. I regularly get contacted by constituents who are extremely distressed because they're having a really hard time working through the maze of government services. Usually it's because they've lost their wallet. Of course, when you lose your wallet, you lose all your personal identification. You lose your birth certificate, your social insurance card, your driver's licence and so on. To get all this needed documentation involves dealing with a number of departments and even different levels of government. The worst part is that when you lose your wallet, you've lost all your identification. As soon as you go to a government agency, they want your identification so you can get the driver's licence or whatever. What are you doing to make access to government services a little bit easier for my constituents?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I appreciate the question from the member for Northumberland. I know how hard he works on behalf of the constituents in Northumberland and surrounding area.

There's no doubt that losing a wallet or a purse for identification has probably happened to many members of this House in the past. We have constituents who come in wondering how to deal with the maze of government services and forms they have to get filled out. We've made progress on this issue. We've created on our ministry Web site one-stop shopping to help with government forms to recover from situations like losing your wallet or preparing, for example, to have a baby and making sure you get a birth certificate.

Hon John R. Baird (Associate Minister of Francophone Affairs): What's the Web site address?

Hon Mr Hudak: The Web site address the member for Nepean-Carleton asks for is www.cbs.gov.on.ca. There are helpful tips on the Life Event bundles. For example, if there's somebody at home watching on TV who is getting married this October, the Life Event bundles at the same time can help her with that situation. Instead of running from office to office, she can simply download the information, fill it out and make sure it is there at the altar come October 5.

Mr Galt: Congratulations, and that's good news. This new program is certainly good for my constituents as well as all Ontarians. We would really have enjoyed this kind of one-stop-shopping access to government services at the time that we were getting married, and that's some 40 years ago. We'd have enjoyed having something like a Web site, but not only that, we'd have enjoyed having things like computers or cellphones or voice mail or fax machines.

Interjection: Electricity?

Mr Galt: Even electricity.

I know that many of my constituents would love to take advantage of this Web site but they're either simply not comfortable enough with the Internet or they don't have access to a computer. Minister, what is the Eves government doing for citizens like these to benefit from the great services offered on the Life Events Web site?

Hon Mr Hudak: The member is right, not everybody can access it through the Web site, but it is at cbs.gov.on.ca. There may be some who want to access by telephone. From Brighton or Port Hope in Northumberland you can call 1-800-267-8097. If you're in eastern Ontario visiting Fort Henry, for example, as a tourist you could stop in at the local offices in Belleville, Lindsay, Peterborough or Kingston. If you're from Niagara, the office is in St Catharines on St Paul Street. There are 50 such government information centres across this province to help constituents deal better with the government to make sure they can help out with these life events, like you've lost your wallet, you're getting married, or you're having a baby, important events like that, where you interact with government—big steps taken. I thank the member for the question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. You've indicated to us that you will be tabling the budget before estimates are tabled on June 17, and we're looking forward to that. We're the last province in the country to table a budget.

When Mr Eves became finance minister in 1995 he promised to get rid of the two sets of books. Unfortunately, still as recently as last year when the budget was tabled, we had a completely different set of numbers in the estimates. In fact, in the Ministry of Health it was a \$900-million difference; in the Ministry of Education, a \$700-million difference. Will you promise us, commit today, that when you table your budget this year we will once and for all in this province be rid of the two sets of books?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): As you are no doubt aware, Ontario does tend to be traditionally a province that brings in its budget later than the other provinces. That practice has continued for many years. Second, we will be having a budget this spring. We will be making the announcement of the date very shortly.

I agree with the honourable member. We are following the advice we've received from a number of experts about how to move the province's books to an accounting mechanism that is transparent, to an accounting mechanism that is accountable to taxpayers, and we are indeed moving to do that in a very prudent fashion.

Mr Phillips: It's a bit laughable because Mr Eves, when he became finance minister in 1995—that's seven years ago—promised all this stuff. In November 1995 he said, "We're going to get rid of the two sets of books," and here we are seven years later, we've still got this charade of two sets of books and we're asked to approve one set of books that is billions of dollars different than the budget.

You told us that we will be getting the budget before estimates. We are expected, this province, to run on a businesslike basis. This is embarrassing. We're now two and a half months into the fiscal year. Mr Eves promised, by the way, in 1995 that we would have the budget before the fiscal year started. In the throne speech he finally agreed that next year we will.

My question is this: will we get the budget finally next week, two and a half months into the year? When our ministries are spending money two and a half months into the year, why in the world do we have to wait until the middle of June to get a budget? Will you commit to having the budget for next week, Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member talks about being embarrassed. Well, he and his government were certainly not very embarrassed with the way they ran the books, with two sets of books and more taxes and more spending and running the province into trouble. He should have been embarrassed about that. Obviously he was not.

Second, as a Liberal, I would have thought that perhaps he might have been embarrassed about the way

the federal Liberals treated the finances of this country, siphoning money off into little trust funds that the auditor couldn't find, taxpayers never knowing where the finances of Ottawa really were, not bothering to table a budget at all. I would have thought that the honourable member, as a Liberal, would have been embarrassed at the behaviour of his federal cousins.

We will have a budget. We said we would do it. We will be honouring the Premier's commitment, as we said we would, and we will continue to manage the finances of this province in a very prudent, fiscally responsible manner.

1450

CRIME AGAINST SENIORS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. Every so often in my riding of Durham, I hear about scams and scammers who prey on seniors. These vultures make phone calls, send out dubious correspondence and even appear at the front doors of unsuspecting seniors, embarrassing them in their own homes. This is a complete shame. It's deplorable. What are we going to do to help seniors and their families protect themselves from financial fraud targeting the most vulnerable members of society?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): This issue concerns all of us. We care about protecting our seniors from this type of crime. We street-proof our kids; we also need to fraud-proof our seniors. Our government is working hard to fraud-proof seniors, showing them what to watch for when a fraud-artist comes calling. A fraud-proof senior is a fraud-artist's worst nightmare. Seniors are learning to detect investment and home renovation fraud, and then they telephone the fraud line.

Some of the tools we use are fraud alerts, a fraud tips calendar, and seminars and educational material available through the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services. We also refer seniors to a seniors' information line. Seniors have done a lot for this province. They deserve to live—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Your own minister is yelling. That's why.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Your own members are complaining. Supplementary?

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, minister, for that very comprehensive answer. I understand that it is not just the organized crime element that seniors must be protected from; often it is close friends and even neighbours and caregivers who mistreat seniors by having them write a cheque on their behalf or by physically or emotionally abusing them. Minister, what is our government doing to combat the very serious issue of elder abuse?

Hon Mr DeFaria: The member is correct, it is an unfortunate reality that many seniors fall victim to fraud and other financial abuses every year. Research done by Elizabeth Podnieks, Chair of the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, has documented that 4% to 10% of seniors suffer from abuse. Many do not even report these crimes because of shame or simply not knowing how or where to get help.

Our provincial government is the first in Canada to commit \$4.3 million toward fighting elder abuse. The strategy does three things: first, it provides for co-ordination of community services; secondly, it educates the public; and thirdly, it trains front-line workers who deal with seniors every day to recognize elder abuse. Our government wants seniors to know that they are not alone. Our government will insure that supports and people are there to help our seniors.

HYDRO ONE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Deputy Premier, earlier this week we learned that Hydro One, publicly owned by the people of Ontario, was giving financial gifts to some of its favourite political parties: five grand to the Liberals and \$7,500 to the Tories. Then on June 4 we heard the Minister of Energy on CBC radio saying that \$7,500 isn't anywhere near enough money to buy influence with this government; it's not anywhere near the kind of money that's going to impress us to make a decision differently. Deputy Premier, if \$7,500 isn't anywhere near enough, how much is enough?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'll let the Minister of Energy respond to that.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): There is something very interesting here. I'd like to ask the member opposite, how much money did Eleanor Clitheroe give to the New Democratic Party in 1995? How much did they give you, I say to the NDP?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm surprised you don't know. You know more about our finances and the Liberals' finances than you know about your finances. Yours should be easy to understand because you don't have any finances. Check back to 1995, my friends, check back to see if Eleanor Clitheroe gave some money to the NDP, and then start making allegations and charges to opposition parties about what they accept from certain associations.

My position on the radio show was simply this: if I was part of the Hydro One—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Holy smoke, I'm not really sure you Liberals should be heckling right now.

I said very clearly that if I were in charge of Hydro One, I wouldn't have donated to political parties, and I stick with that position.

PETITIONS

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition here—Rick Bartolucci, the member for Sudbury, and I have many petitions here—and the title is, “Listen: Our Hearing is Important!” It reads like this:

“Whereas services delisted by the Harris government now exceed \$100 million in total; and

“Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions; and

“Whereas the new Harris government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario; and

“Whereas the new Harris government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario; and

“Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services.”

I am in full agreement with Rick Bartolucci of Sudbury and the thousands of people who have signed this. Emily, I will give you this to give to the desk.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member’s bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

“Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

“Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

“Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos (MPP—Niagara Centre) will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

“Therefore I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill.”

I have affixed my signature as well.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon John R. Baird (Associate Minister of Francophone Affairs): Mr Speaker, I have the intended business of the House for next week. Pursuant to standing order 55, the statement of business of the House for next week is as follows:

On Monday afternoon, debate will be on Bill 58, the reliable energy and consumer protection bill. On Monday evening we will continue debate on Bill 124, the building code.

On Tuesday afternoon, we will be debating Bill 124 again. Tuesday evening’s business will be Bill 80, the Hydro One Inc. Directors and Officers Act.

Wednesday afternoon will be a Liberal opposition day. Wednesday evening’s business will be Bill 90.

On Thursday morning, during private members’ public business, we will discuss ballot item number 49, standing in the name of Mr Hoy, and ballot item number 50, standing in the name of Mr Martin. Thursday afternoon’s business will be Bill 80. Thursday evening’s business is still to be determined.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Mr Speaker, prior to presenting my petition, may I also ask that the clock perhaps could be set back, since the government whip did not present a petition but in fact the orders of the day?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I’ll do it with my own watch.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you. I have a petition to the provincial Legislature.

“Whereas the Conservative government promised to institute patient-based budgeting for health care services in the 1995 Common Sense Revolution; and

“Whereas community care access centres now face a collective shortfall of \$175 million due to a funding freeze by the provincial government; and

“Whereas due to this funding shortfall CCACs have cut back on home care services affecting many sick and elderly Ontarians; and

“Whereas these cuts in services are mostly in home-making services, forcing Ontarians into more expensive long-term-care facilities or back into hospital;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately institute real patient-based budgeting for health care services, including home care, so as to ensure that working families in Ontario can access the care services they need.”

I am in full agreement with the concerns of my constituents and affix my signature to demonstrate that.

1500

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas many high school students in Ontario outraged at the harshness of the new curriculum choose to leave school on May 15, 2002;

“Inadequate funding made difficult the implementation of the new curriculum;

“High school students should not be used as forced labour in addition to the extra hours required for the new curriculum;

“There is inadequate funding for the double-cohort year. Universities and colleges will have trouble providing room for all those students;

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

“We demand that a committee with government, teachers, trustees, parents and high school students establish a funding model to correct the shortcomings in the system;

“Further be it resolved that a committee with government, teachers, trustees, parents and high school students make recommendations to help those students who have had to change their career paths due to the harshness of the new system;

“Further be it resolved that students are no longer to do compulsory volunteer work;

“Further be it resolved that adequate funding be given for the double-cohort year.”

I have affixed my signature as well.

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): I have a petition here signed by parents of an elementary school in my riding.

“To the Ontario Legislature:

“Whereas the current government funding formula for education is not sufficient to meet the needs of Ontario school boards;

“Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) is currently faced with a large deficit;

“Whereas Viscount Alexander Public School, a school within the jurisdiction of the OCDSB, is suffering from lack of funds to meet the needs of its students;

“Whereas Viscount Alexander Public School has a higher than average percentage of English-as-a-second-language and special-education students and government cutbacks have had a debilitating impact on our school;

“Whereas the parent advisory committee of Viscount Alexander Public School supports the OCDSB in its efforts to seek additional funding;

“We, the majority of parents of Viscount Alexander Public School, gathered within a 24-hour period to appose our signatures, hereby petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the ... government review the education funding formula with a view to increasing it so that school boards and particularly the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board are able to meet their obligations to

the students for whom they are responsible by providing a quality education.”

It is a pleasure for me to assign my signature.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the residents of Centre Hastings are facing an immediate and critical situation in accessing physician services; and

“Whereas a retiring family physician has been unsuccessful in procuring a replacement physician, potentially leaving 5,000 patients without a doctor; and

“Whereas accessibility to already overcrowded hospital emergency departments and walk-in clinics is limited because of distance and availability to transportation; and

“Whereas Centre Hastings has been designated as an underserved area in need of five physicians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act immediately to establish a community health centre in Centre Hastings.”

I will affix my signature to this petition.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Harris government’s plan to privatize and deregulate Ontario’s electricity system will lead to higher rates because private owners will sell more power to US customers whose rates are typically 50% higher than Ontario’s; and

“Whereas selling coal plants like Nanticoke to the private sector will lead to more pollution because the private owners will run the plants at full capacity to earn a profit; and

“Whereas electricity deregulation in California has led to sky-high rates and blackouts; and

“Whereas Ontario needs a system of public power that will ensure rate stability, environmental protection and secure access to power;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, call on the government to scrap electricity deregulation and privatization and bring in a system of accountable public power. The first priority for such a public power system must be incentives for energy conservation and green power. Electricity rates and major energy projects must be subject to full public hearings and binding rulings by a public regulator instead of leaving energy rates to private profit.”

This has been signed by a number of people in the Hamilton area. I agree with the petitioners. I have affixed my signature to it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'm proud to present a petition from Ledbury school, one of the finest schools in north Toronto.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the undersigned residents and taxpayers of the province of Ontario, are gravely concerned about the present state of financial support for publicly funded schools in the province Ontario,

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

"(1) We respectfully request that an immediate public review of the current education funding formula for public education in Ontario be conducted with the participation of all stakeholders in the public education system.

"(2) We further respectfully request that until the review is completed, boards are allotted funds equal to the amount spent in the 2001-02 school year, plus funding for inflation and enrolment increases."

I fully support this petition from Ledbury school. I'm more than proud to affix my signature to it.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition that concerns the very grave issue of electricity deregulation in Ontario. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of Toronto, demand that the government immediately stop the process of privatizing our electricity transmission system, the network of steel towers, transformers, wooden poles which transmit power from generation plants to our homes, and further postpone the electricity deregulation process until the Ontario public is given proof that privatization will not result in price increases, and place a moratorium on any further retailing of electricity until the Ontario Energy Board comes up with a standard contract to be used by all retailers; and

"That a standard contract spell out in clear terms that the residential users are waiving their rights to future rebates in exchange for fixed rates over a specified period of time."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm happy to sign my name to it.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'm proud to join over 200,000 people in Ontario who have petitioned this Legislature as follows:

"Whereas animal abusers are not currently subject to any provincial penalties;

"Whereas it is currently impossible for a judge to ban puppy and kitten mill operators from owning animals for the rest of their lives; and

"Whereas Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals investigators need to act on instances

of cruelty to animals in a more timely fashion, thereby lessening the animals' suffering;

"Whereas it is currently not an offence to train an animal to fight another animal; and

"Whereas Ontario's animals are not adequately protected by the current law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass the amendments to the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act developed by a governmental working group (which included the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and submitted to the office of the Solicitor General of Ontario in June of 2001, so that the above conditions, among others, will be properly addressed."

I am more than proud to affix my signature to this petition, along with 200,000 other Ontarians.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Ruprecht: This petition goes to the Minister of Education, addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"That we believe that the heart of education in our province is the relationship between student and teacher and that this human and relational dimension should be maintained and extended in any proposed reform.

"As Minister of Education and Training, you should know how strongly we oppose many of these secondary school reform recommendations being proposed by your minister and by your government. We recognize and support the need to review secondary education in Ontario. The proposal for reform as put forward by your ministry, however, is substantially flawed in several key areas:

"(a) reduced instructional time;

"(b) reduction of instruction in English;

"(c) reduction of qualified teaching personnel;

"(d) academic work experience credit not linked to educational curriculum;

"(e) devaluation of formal education.

"We strongly urge this ministry to delay the implementation of secondary school reform so that all interested stakeholders, parents, students, school councils, trustees and teachers are able to participate in a more meaningful, consultative process which will help ensure that a high quality of publicly funded education is provided."

Since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I'm happy to sign my name to it.

1510

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RELIABLE ENERGY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA FIABILITÉ DE L'ÉNERGIE ET LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 5, 2002, on the motion for second reading of Bill 58, An Act to amend certain statutes in relation to the energy sector / Projet de loi 58, Loi modifiant certaines lois en ce qui concerne le secteur de l'énergie.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate? In rotation, I'd like to recognize the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This bill is all about the privatization of Ontario Hydro as we knew it, as Ontarians have built it with their sacrifice, with their hard work, with their commitment, with their investment over the course of decades and generations, people like our parents and our grandparents, people like generations of new Canadians, immigrants to this province and to this country, who understood the value of public ownership of certain assets, who understood that there are certain things—in this case hydroelectric power, electricity—that are so important to the health and safety of communities, to the health and safety of families and to our industrial growth and maintenance that it is not in our interests, it's contrary to our interests, to have electricity controlled by for-profit corporations whose primary goal is not the provision of electricity—never mind the provision of electricity at cost, which has been the mandate of Ontario Hydro in this province since its inception.

Private, corporate, for-profit sectors, inevitably non-Canadian, US and beyond, whose primary purpose and motivation and goal is profit, and the people be damned—New Democrats have been and remain consistently and adamantly opposed to the privatization of hydroelectricity in Ontario. We're opposed to it; we've always been. New Democrats have led the fight in this province to keep Ontario's hydroelectricity public—publicly owned and under public control. We will continue to fight that fight, arm in arm with the vast majority of Ontarians, arm in arm with trade unionists and their leadership, arm in arm, quite frankly, as well with no small number of private sector entrepreneurs, industrialists, who understand in a way the other parties in this Legislature don't that publicly owned, publicly controlled, at-cost electricity is vital for the maintenance of the industrial jobs in this province, for their preservation as well as for industrial growth.

Nowhere is that more acutely apparent than down where I come from, where the heavy industry, the value-

added manufacturing jobs, the good jobs—oh, women and men have had to work hard at those jobs for a long time, throughout the history of that kind of work, whether it's in steel mills or in pulp and paper mills or in pipe mills or in foundries or in forges or in abrasives factories like Exlon and Washington Mills—the latter down in Niagara Falls, the former in Thorold.

These are high electricity users. These are places that operate arc furnaces. These are places for whom the cost of electricity and maintaining the lowest possible cost of electricity is crucial to their ongoing presence of manufacturing sites in Ontario and specifically in Niagara region. The paper mill in Thorold is a high electricity consumer, and it goes well beyond that. It goes well into the rural parts of Niagara and Ontario and into the agricultural industry. Chicken farmers—and you, Speaker, are familiar with those types of operations—rely upon a steady, reliable and as economical as possible a source of electricity. The whole new growing industry in Niagara, the industry around the cultivation of flowers and greenhousing, relies upon a steady, stable and as economical as possible a source of electricity.

This debate is critical and the direction of this government is disastrous. This government clearly is beholden, not to the people of Ontario—there are no two ways about that—but to its corporate friends, to its Bay Street buddies, and it has met the demands upon it by those same corporate friends and Bay Street buddies.

This government is in the process of preparing the privatization of not only Hydro One, the transmission lines of this province that ensure that electricity is delivered to the darkest and farthest corner, but as well the privatization of every generating station, and they're joined by their friends the Liberals in that regard. This is not just an insult to the people of this province; this is an outright betrayal of the people of this province. Ontario Hydro is one of those trusts.

Did this government go to the people of Ontario in the election in 1999 and suggest that that election was all about giving this government, the Conservative Party of Ontario, Mike Harris and then Ernie Eves, the power, the authority, the mandate to sell off that public asset? Far from it. Indeed, the government tried to hide its light under a bushel, and in terms of what the electors of this province expected and what was the subject matter of debate during the last election, the sell-off of the public ownership of Ontario Hydro has been one of the cruellest hoaxes and surprises imposed upon the people of this province.

Clearly, this government has no mandate to pursue its agenda of the privatization of Ontario Hydro, be it Hydro One or the generating sector. Clearly, that has never been the subject matter of an election debate. One of the things that Howard Hampton and New Democrats have been saying during the course of our fight to keep Ontario's electrical generation and transmission system public, one of the things that Howard Hampton has been saying clearly, is, "Let's have an election."

If Ernie Eves and his Minister of Energy and his cabinet and his backbenchers really think the people of Ontario want to sell off one of their most prized public assets at bargain basement prices, then let's have an election. Call an election and let that be the subject matter of the debate during the course of that election.

Now we have the government trying to restrict the extent of debate over the issue right here in this Legislature. This government wants out of here so bad on June 28, they can taste it; they can. They're just squirming in their seats. There are little puddles forming out of the excitement of these people wanting to get out of here by June 28. They are so anxious. There isn't a snowball's chance in Hades of this government sitting beyond June 28. To get out of here in three weeks' time, as they want, they're going to ram through this legislation and try to ram through as many other pieces of legislation that fulfill commitments they've made to their special interest friends. They're going to try to ram through as much as possible.

1520

Oh, there's a lot of talk about public hearings. Public hearings, my foot. Do you know what this government's got in mind for public hearings? A couple of days here and a couple of days there and maybe one day here at Queen's Park. This government, the Conservatives at Queen's Park, haven't got the slightest intention of sending this bill out to committee for any meaningful debate. Meaningful debate at the committee level would mean that this bill went out during the course of the summer so that every citizen of this province would have an opportunity to express their view on this government's sell-off of Ontario's publicly owned, publicly controlled hydroelectric system.

I tell you, the people of this province want to have a say about it. They've got things to say about it. But this government has no interest in hearing from them. This government doesn't want to hear from you folks, it doesn't want to hear from you folks, it just wants to ram this legislation through this assembly and then skedaddle so they can hide out, turn turtle, duck, take cover from the flak.

You've got Tory backbenchers going back to their ridings. Some of them, I suspect, aren't even going back to their ridings any more on the weekends because they come back pummelled and bruised. They report during their caucus meetings, "You won't believe what people are telling me about our agenda at Queen's Park, our agenda, the Tory agenda, the Conservative agenda, the Ernie Eves agenda to sell off Ontario Hydro"—the public, the people are approaching Tory backbenchers in supermarkets, in gas stations, wherever it is that Tory backbenchers have the courage any more to venture out to, telling them, "Don't sell off Ontario Hydro." Tory backbenchers are coming back to their caucus meetings bruised and pummelled and they're saying, "Oh, we can't do this. This is a serious political mistake. The people of Ontario don't want us to sell off Ontario Hydro. It's the

jewel in our crown of publicly owned assets in this province."

But the government's going to forge ahead, regardless, nonetheless, anyway. It is a tragic, tragic course of events, because you see, we know what the consequences are going to be from the sell-off of Hydro One. The sell-off of Hydro One, the introduction of profit—and don't for a moment buy into the line—what a cockamamie line—about how the private sector—let's talk about the private sector—can do it more efficiently, it can do it cheaper. What, like the board of directors that you guys appointed? All Tory chums, hand-picked Tory buddies for the board of directors of Hydro One, with their private sector kind of salaries: \$2 million, \$2.1 million, \$2.3 million. That's just the annual income.

One hundred and seventy-six thousand dollars a year for a car allowance. I've got a 1994 Chevy S-10 out there that runs real good that I can let you have for around four and a half grand, Mr Baird. One hundred and seventy-six thousand dollars for a car allowance? What kind of car are you talking about? It sure as heck ain't one made in North America. Good grief. What is the president of Hydro One doing driving around in a Rolls-Royce or a Bentley or some kind of high-priced, sophisticated, elite British-made sports car like an Aston Martin or an Italian Maserati? What in God's name does Ms Clitheroe need with that kind of car? Wouldn't a Chevy Impala suffice? Or maybe let's go all out and buy her a \$40,000 Buick Park Avenue.

But \$176,000? There's a stench around that. It's the stench of a company's collusion and corruption. Half a million a year? How much was it a year to sponsor a racing yacht with "Hydro One" imprinted on the side? I've got folks down in Niagara who work real hard to take out their little 10-horsepower Evinrude on a 14-foot wooden boat on the weekend on to Lake Erie to try to snag a couple of perch, and yet they've got to pay, through their hydro rates, for Hydro One to be sponsoring some sort of elite, rich-folk kind of racing yacht where the Lalique crystal is preserved in special racks so it doesn't bang around and crack or break, and where the Krug champagne flows readily, because you don't sail around in one of those yachts without the accoutrements. The price of the yacht is just the tip of the iceberg, because when you're paying almost half a million bucks a year, ratepayers, electricity ratepayers—this is the private sector model that these guys worship. You don't run around in a half-million-dollars-a-year sponsored yacht and drink Coca-Cola out of a can. You're drinking Krug champagne out of Lalique glasses, no two ways about it.

We've only seen the tip of the iceberg, and the question that really begs to be asked is, how many of you Tory members have been to sea? How many of you have shared in the incredible generosity of Hydro One, this hand-picked, Tory buddy board of directors, their incredible generosity with the monies of hard-working folks like where I come from?

Let me tell you about where I come from. You know full well where I come from, and down there some of the

lowest-income people live in apartments that were constructed by developers who wanted to keep their costs as low as possible as well. In the course of that construction, what kind of heat did they install in those apartments? Electric heating. You know what I mean: baseboard heating—incredibly low instalment cost, low capital cost but, man, does that tenant get whacked down the road.

I've got senior citizens down in Niagara who have worked hard all of their lives, raised their kids, helped raise their grandkids, paid off their homes, who, because of the natural gas increases since last winter, along with the increased property taxes as a result of this government's downloading, are in fear of losing their homes. When we start to see, come a couple of days of the hot summer months and the increased electricity consumption that accompanies that, the incredible new, high, spiked rates in electricity costs, not only do those senior citizens—hard-working women and men, every single one of them—have to fear natural gas prices, but now they have to fear that electricity bill that's going to come. You see, their incomes haven't changed. They're retired. They're living on fixed incomes, but their hydro bills are going to increase 10%, 20%, 30% and 40%. We know that's going to happen because we know that's what happened in other jurisdictions where electricity transmission and production have been deregulated, privatized and taken over by profit-making corporate and mostly multinational interests. It's the inevitable result.

Not only are some of our lowest-income people, be it our senior citizens—our folks and our grandfolks trying to live out their retirement and dignity on modest incomes—going to get hit, and get hit hard, I'm telling you, to the point of some of those folks having to give up their own homes, which some of them helped build themselves or built entirely by themselves; we're going to see some of the lowest-income people—people living in apartments—especially down where I come from, who are going to find themselves on the cusp of homelessness because of the inevitable increases in electricity costs that are being introduced by this government's adamant but damned agenda of selling off Hydro, every facet of it, to its corporate buddies.

It is imperative that people across this province continue to rally around the fight to keep Ontario's hydroelectricity public. You've heard the Web site www.publicpower.ca talked about in this Legislature. People should log on to that Web site, access it—www.publicpower.ca—and find out what's happening to our publicly owned, publicly controlled hydroelectricity system here in the province of Ontario, and learn about the betrayal of each and every resident of this province by Mr Harris, then Mr Eves and his gang of backbenchers, who are not at all interested in the people of Ontario but who would rather repay the debt that's been created by the incredible financial support they've received from some very interested parties to the privatization of hydroelectricity.

1530

Since they were elected the government in 1995, this party, the Conservative Party of Ontario, has gotten almost 30 grand from Direct Energy alone—\$30,000. On June 4 the Minister of Energy, Mr Stockwell, said on CBC radio, "I know we got \$7,500 from Hydro One. But trust me, \$7,500 isn't enough to buy this government." So I asked him earlier today, "If \$7,500 isn't enough, how much is?" Did Direct Energy meet the test? They gave you 30 grand. I think they did, because you've accommodated Direct Energy in their door-to-door rip-offs from day one.

What about Enron? They hope to make a mint in the privatization of Hydro in Ontario. They were one of the chief consultants for this government. One of the partners was Enron. The Conservative Party was doing fine by them too, almost 16 grand.

It's clear that we're opposing this legislation. But it's not just about opposing it today; it's about fighting it through the balance of this month and making sure this bill doesn't pass.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Hon John R. Baird (Associate Minister of Francophone Affairs): I listened with great interest to the speech by the member for Niagara Centre, and I was surprised he didn't quote one of our colleagues in the Legislature. When asked in a discussion in the Legislature about privatization whether he thought we should privatize, he said, "I think we should."

"Do you support privatization?"

"I think we should."

When people suggested he had said "I think we should," he said he didn't, that it was misquoted. That was the Leader of the Opposition, Mr McGuinty, talking about proceeding with privatization on December 12: "I think we should." And now he's against it, because he's changed his mind again.

He had the nerve to come in here—and I was surprised the member for Niagara Centre didn't mention this in his speech—and call our leader and our Premier the king of flip-flops when on a fundamental issue like that he changed his mind again; he didn't give it enough thought. I still don't think he's given it enough thought. Maybe we can tune in for the second reading vote or the third reading vote or next year or next time we're debating Hydro. Maybe he'll change his mind again.

I was surprised that the member for Niagara Centre, when talking about his Web page, didn't say—I plugged into his Ontariopower.com Web site last night—

Mr Kormos: Publicpower.

Hon Mr Baird: Whatever. I punched it in, and whose face popped up on the screen? It was a virus. All of a sudden this creeping face of Howard Hampton came up when I punched that in. It gave my computer a virus, which we're still trying to fix.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I should respond to the minister, the member for Nepean-Carleton. It's interesting that Mr Eves said, "We're proceeding with the privatization." Then he was about to

lose the by-election in Orangeville, and the day before, a big headline, "Sale of Hydro off the Table." Then he comes back here and all of a sudden he's got this legislation. It's back on the table. I think we have to ask the member from Nepean-Carleton where his Premier is, where the last Premier was and where he will be tomorrow.

Just getting back to my colleague from Niagara Centre, the one thing that he mentioned about ordinary people—and I know the most disgusting thing that I've ever seen came across my desk yesterday. I had a widow, a pensioner, who had to fax me a copy of her husband's death certificate to try to prove that one of these door-to-door hustlers this government allowed to rip off people for the last four years on gas and electricity forged her dead husband's signature on a contract. The only way she can get out of it is she had to fax me her husband's death certificate. The poor gentleman passed away in 1995.

That is what this government has created. They purposely put forth these door-to-door hucksters. They forced them upon innocent people across Ontario. Now they pretend they're going to try to do something, but for the last three years they promoted these door-to-door con artists, allowed them to rip off people, selling natural gas, selling electricity door-to-door and signing false contracts. There is even a church in Toronto where they forged the signature of the priest, at St Stanislaus church. This government condoned it, allowed it and now is pretending to pay attention.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'm rising to respond to some of the outrageous comments from both honourable members from both parties.

First of all, to the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, come on, this legislation has strong consumer protection sections in it. This legislation protects consumers from that kind of activity it's said we condoned, which we spoke against and took steps to fix, so it's just absolutely objectionable, unreasonable and just not accurate, what the member for Eglinton-Lawrence says.

Now we come to our favourite member, the member for Niagara Centre, who is concerned about selling off, he says, Hydro One. I appreciate the comments and concerns we've heard from the public, which the Premier has said are going to be guiding his future decisions on the disposition of Hydro One, but let's take a look at a success story in the electricity system where this government recognized the old Ontario Hydro's management of plants like Bruce was not working. We had a decrepit plant that was not going anywhere. We had members of the community and members of the union petitioning the member for Niagara Centre's government, saying, "Please help us. We're losing the plant, we're losing jobs and it's damaging our community."

What was the NDP government's response? They shut it down. What we did was find a private sector organization with experience and the expertise that not only has the plant up and running again, but might actually get Bruce A restarted, the units Ontario Hydro couldn't put in. They're putting in new investment. We have 1,000

jobs saved; we have 260 more new jobs; young people with opportunities to apprentice, 50 new every year. We have \$15 million of economic activity in that community every year because of the decisions this government made—

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I appreciate the comments of the member for Niagara Centre. Talking about the board, the board of Ontario Hydro was doing exactly what the government wanted them to do. They were following instructions from the government. It was only when the government got caught that they finally admitted they made a huge mistake and are now trying to make the board the scapegoat. The board should be gone but the government has to be held accountable.

I will use the evidence. Every single one of those board members was hand-picked by the government when Mr Eves was Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance. The board was given direction and instructions from the government. Mr Wilson, when he was Minister of Energy, tells us he met on a regular basis with these people. They are professional board members. They would have kept the shareholder directly and totally involved. To say anything other than that frankly is not credible.

The additional piece of evidence: on May 15, Mr Eves, the Premier, was asked, "Is the \$6 million appropriate?" for Ms Clitheroe. He referred it to Mr Stockwell who never commented on it on May 15. He refused to answer it. He then makes up a story that as soon as he was briefed on it, he was outraged. Frankly, that is not credible. If he was outraged about it, the day he was asked in the Legislature, he would have responded saying that he was outraged. He said that he was so outraged that he was going to do something about it. We have no evidence at all—none, zero—that he did anything until last week.

1540

We have asked for letters that the government sent to the board. Mr Wilson has now said that he tried to get the board to change, but every time he raised it, they would simply increase it. I want evidence that Mr Wilson, on behalf of the shareholders, sent the board a letter and told them it was unacceptable, but we have yet to see any evidence of that. What the government is saying is not credible.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre has two minutes to respond.

Mr Kormos: Two minutes to respond: I want to tell you about the real stinker in this whole scam and that is the debt. You see, if I own a company and I own the shares in that company and I want to sell that company by virtue of selling the shares, a buyer buys the shares and they acquire that company, lock, stock and barrel. They acquire its capital, they acquire its assets, they acquire its accounts receivable and they acquire its accounts payable.

But understand very clearly that the ratepayer is still going to be on the hook after the sell-off of Hydro. The ratepayers—you folks—are still going to be called upon to pay off every single penny of the Hydro debt. It's like buying a house, getting a mortgage and then having your house confiscated by the government so that somebody else can live in it, but you've still got to pay the mortgage. Every single penny of that debt is going to be paid for by ratepayers, but the assets of Hydro, the generating capacity of Hydro, the transmission lines, are going to be sold off so that private companies, inevitably US or European-based, can make profits on the backs of Ontarians: hard-working women and men, retirees, young families, people losing jobs because industries will move away rather than pay the higher electricity rates.

It's not the kind of Ontario that the people in Niagara Centre, where I come from, built, nor is it the kind of Ontario they want their children to live in.

This bill should be defeated. Half a dozen Tory backbenchers with courage, half a dozen Tory backbenchers with a little bit of guts would make a difference. Where are you?

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Mr Baird: I have courage and guts to take difficult stands on issues.

I'm pleased to share my time—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: We can't have conversations between Scarborough and the corner of Eglinton and Lawrence. We can't have conversations between Uxbridge and Whitby and Niagara Falls. If you were doing that at any other time, you'd use a telephone. So if you're going to do it, you're going to do it with a telephone now; you're not going to do it in here. Am I clear?

The Chair recognizes the chief government whip.

Hon Mr Baird: I'd like to share my time with the hard-working member for Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop.

It's my purpose this afternoon to speak a bit about the important bill we're dealing with, the Reliable Energy and Consumer Protection Act, and the environmental amendments that are part of it, which I think are quite important. The environment is a big issue, a growing concern to people in my constituency. In my community of Nepean-Carleton, I hear that regularly and I want to talk about some of the parts of this bill that deal with that.

The bill we're discussing has some proposed amendments to the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act, which is not administered by the Ministry of Energy; in fact, it's administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Ontarians want to receive their electricity from sources that don't damage their natural environment. We heard this back in the hearings on Bill 35. My constituents have spoken to me about this issue a good amount.

We could take methane, for example, off the Trail Road landfill site and that would be enough to provide electricity to all of Bells Corners, some 12,000 people. But until we opened up the grid to competition, that

would have been illegal. So instead of harnessing that power for a good purpose that would be environmentally friendly, we banned it. We outlawed it and said, "You have to use the monopoly of Ontario Hydro." The opening of the market on May 1 certainly does help with that, as do the amendments contained in this legislation.

My constituents are passionate about it and they want government to do something about it. This has been an issue for many years, and I mentioned that one specific example. In fact, it would have been cheaper for a big employer in my constituency like Northern Telecom to just simply get a slab of concrete and a turbine generator with natural gas and generate the electricity on their own rather than buy it from the monopolistic monster that was Ontario Hydro before it was broken up.

The one thing that our government has done is to bring a new concept to our electricity market. The concept is competition. It's competition that will lead suppliers to provide the innovations in clean power that the people of Ontario and people in my community want. Another is to introduce proposed amendments to the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act. Briefly, this act provides for the use of the water of lakes and rivers and regulates improvements in them such as certain types of construction. It regulates the safe design, construction, repair and operation of dams, the maintenance of water levels and the use of waterworks.

No matter where we live, we all depend on water. We need it to generate electricity. That's particularly the case in Niagara region, where my colleague who just spoke is from. We need it to irrigate crops; we need it to sustain our economy. Indeed, we need water for our daily lives. This is why the government has introduced these amendments, to ensure that our water is used responsibly and for the benefit of all Ontarians. These amendments are intended to ensure that water power producers manage water levels and flows responsibly, especially during seasonal periods of peak electricity prices, that they provide certainty and a level playing field for the water power industry, that they establish clear industry compliance provisions and provide all water users with assurances of full participation in how water resources will be managed and how any environmental, social and economic impacts will be addressed. For example, it would ensure that recreational users, cottagers and commercial interests are not adversely affected.

The amendments that we're discussing in Bill 58 contain provisions for water power producers to prepare water management plans, providing full, open and clear opportunities for stakeholder participation and consultation. Once approved by MNR, industry would then manage and operate facilities in accordance with the approved plan. While formal water management plans are being developed, the ministry will work with producers to ensure that water levels and flows continue to be managed appropriately. Where existing operations are well documented, the ministry will adopt these operating plans as interim water management plans until formal plans can be completed.

In other situations, the ministry will work with operators to develop interim plans. Interim plans will be enforceable under the act and subject to the penalty provisions of the act. So enforcement is important. Penalty provisions will be both monetary and non-monetary. The proposed penalties would match the highest in other provinces with comparable legal systems and remedies. Ontarians will not tolerate and should not have to suffer the consequences of those people who, whether for commercial or private or personal needs, want to abuse our environment. The amendments contained in the bill we're discussing today send a very loud and clear signal to potential backsliders that we will not tolerate the abuse of our most precious resource—our water.

This bill we're debating is important to the environment. Ontarians have made it clear that they want to receive their electrical power in a manner that ensures that their environment is not damaged. If passed, the proposed Reliable Energy and Consumer Protection Act would give the government more ability to protect the environment. I think we can do more and that's why the legislation contains some provisions on that.

This has been a long debate. I sat on the legislative committee that dealt with Bill 35 and did a lot of consultations and travelled around the province. Bill 35 broke up the old Ontario Hydro and opened up the market. It actually got support from the official opposition on second reading in principle but they did not see fit to support it in third reading. They changed their minds. This is sort of like Dalton McGuinty. On December 12, Dalton McGuinty, when asked about privatization, said, "I think we should." Someone said, "Could you put that in context?" which I'm happy to do. He said, "I said there's some speculation that rates are going to go up, and do you know what? Rates may very well have to go up. We've been getting a bit of a free ride here in terms of the debt Ontario Hydro has amassed, but if we're going to move forward with privatization, as I think we should, let's bring it into the House or bring it into committee."

1550

It's funny. Mr McGuinty says we should go forward with privatization and bring legislation into the House to do that. The legislation we're debating before us today deals with, in some respects, just establishing property rights for the disposition of property, if that was the decision that was taken.

I have no beef with the argument that the government should take a period of time to consult, to look at other options and to have the courage to listen to the people of the province of Ontario. You bet your boots people are concerned about this issue, as we all should be concerned about this important issue.

The reality is, the opening of the marketplace on May 1, concurrent with the IPO at that time, in April before the court decision, did make it confusing for some people who didn't see the difference between the opening of the market and the IPO that was discussed. That's why the new Minister of Energy, the new Premier, the new

government of the province of Ontario, are taking a reasonable period of time to look at the alternatives that could be debated. But I think it's important that we look at what happened with Bruce, where a private operator was brought in to operate that government resource. They really turned it around, and I'll tell you, the economy in Bruce was facing some huge economic challenges when it came to the former Ontario Hydro facility at Bruce. I think that experience has been good. I think the Provincial Auditor had some comments to that effect, as we heard in the Legislature at the standing committee on public accounts earlier today.

When you look at the mess that was Ontario Hydro, with the gigantic debt that was racked up by governments of all political persuasion, you know what? No government should be proud of its work, whether it's a Tory government, a Liberal government or a New Democratic government that presided over the former Ontario Hydro. It needs to be cleaned up; it needs to be changed. We should have the courage to tackle that issue, not with a Band-Aid but with some substantive changes.

I think opening up the market and competition will be good. I can remember the naysayers when the CRTC opened up long distance services. What has happened? Rates have gone down consistently. There's a whole new set of plans and services that are available that simply weren't there. Would anyone suggest we go back to the old monopoly of Bell Canada with respect to long distance services? I don't know a single soul in the province of Ontario who would argue that. I think it's important that we move forward, have a period of time where the government and the Premier and the Minister of the Environment and the cabinet can look at this issue. I think it is important to establish property rights such as the disposition, or whether it's an income trust, or whether it's any number of other models, whether it's an IPO; you name it. That's what the legislation that we're doing does.

It also contains, as I said, some important environmental protections which I think are in order, as well as some further consumer protection initiatives, some of which—not all of which—were debated by our colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin this morning. I support protections for the consumer, but I thought the member's resolution this morning went too far. He thinks it's OK for him to go door to door, but doesn't want anyone else to be able to go door to door and talk about a particular issue and a free marketplace. I think free markets are the way to go.

So I will be voting in favour of Bill 58, and look forward to the speech by my friend the member for Simcoe North, who I know has a barnburner in store for all of us.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise today and speak a little bit on Bill 58, the proposed Reliable Energy and Consumer Protection Act, 2002. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister of Energy for the work he's done on this bill. It's a very important issue for all of us in this House. I know this

debate will continue on and we will come up with a good solution when it's all said and done.

The restructuring of the electricity sector has provided consumers and Ontario with a historic opportunity to choose how they receive their electricity. They can now choose to go with fixed rate contracts offered by retailers or to stay with the fluctuating market rates offered by their local utilities. They can do this because the government opened the electricity market to competition on May 1 of this year.

As you know, this followed a long, long process dating back to the Common Sense Revolution, and all the consultations that took place, the Macdonald commission and the report on the white paper, leading up the Electricity Act, passed in this House in 1998, which pointed out that we would open the market some time around May 1, 2002. At least as importantly, they can also choose how they receive their electricity from clean, environmentally friendly sources. I'd like to speak a little bit on some of the environmentally friendly sources of electricity.

Some in this House have argued that Ontario should revert to publicly owned power to promote green power. They seem to believe that if we just go back to the old days of Ontario Hydro, and we've certainly heard that from the New Democratic Party, green power would somehow miraculously appear. Ontario has had public power for nearly 100 years, but somehow that miracle never quite happened. Public power didn't provide a significant portfolio of green power. It failed to devote the necessary effort to explore cleaner sources of energy because it lacked sufficient incentive to do so. It lacked incentive because it was not subject to competition. Thanks to the restructuring of Ontario's electricity sector, it now is.

Competition is Ontario's best guarantee of a cleaner electricity sector. Ontarians want to protect the environment. They know that clean energy will go a long way toward achieving that objective and they continue to express their growing demand for cleaner, affordable sources of energy. Where there is demand, you can be sure that supply will follow. Only since the Energy Competition Act was passed have consumers been given a say about how electricity is generated in Ontario, and because customers now have choice, we are beginning to see green power initiatives. In the long run, it will be competition that will encourage further innovation and the development of cleaner technologies.

Competition will provide the incentive for more environmentally friendly power sources like the windmill. The largest windmill in the world in fact is constructed near Pickering. Competition has enabled the Toronto Renewable Energy Co-operative to build on a lakeshore a windmill large enough to power 500 homes, and competition has resulted in Bruce Power and Ontario Power Generation building the province's first windmill on the Bruce Peninsula. It's actually a windmill farm.

Many other environmentally friendly electricity generating ideas are being pursued in towns and cities around

the province. We heard Mr Baird talk earlier about methane gas, but I am also interested in wave power. I know that wave power in our Great Lakes system, as it is in the ocean systems in some places across the world, has some real opportunities, right here in Ontario, having the Great Lakes that we have.

The Energy Competition Act made these projects possible. Before that, the only two electrons that flowed on the electricity grid were those allowed by Ontario Hydro. Now, anyone whose generating system meets the safety and reliability standards of the IMO can have access to the grid to sell clean electricity to their customers.

Competition allows smaller, cleaner generating plants to be built closer to where electricity is needed. Our government was able to order the Lakeview station to cease burning coal by April 2005 because we are confident that investors will fill that demand, and our confidence is being rewarded. Private companies have already proposed more than \$3 billion worth of new generating projects, most of them powered by clean natural gas. The Sibley plants at Goreway and Southdown in Brampton and Mississauga are well advanced in planning and in approvals, and the TransAlta plant in Sarnia is under construction and well on the way to competition and will soon be operational.

When private money finances the electricity sector, governments are free to use tax dollars to pay for priority programs like health care and education that we hear so much demand for not only across our province but across our country as well.

Clearly, the government recognizes the value of competition, but we also recognize the need for strong regulation. That is why we developed policies to reduce emissions from the energy sector and, last fall, announced stringent caps on nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide emissions from electricity generation. These new caps began to take effect in January this year. By the time they are fully implemented in 2007, they will cut smog and acid rain causing emissions of nitrogen oxides from fossil plants by 53% of actual emissions in 2000. Sulphur dioxide emissions will be down by 25%. Ontario Power Generation has already begun to meet these new targets with an investment of \$250 million for selective catalytic reduction technology, which will reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 80% in four of the fossil units.

1600

This is all good news for the environment and for the consumer. But consumers need a way of knowing where the electricity comes from. That's why the proposed Reliable Energy and Consumer Protection Act includes amendments to enable the government to establish an environmental information tracking and reporting system, which would allow consumers to make informed choices about electricity offerings. The tracking system would be an essential part of the government's environmental labelling program.

The purpose of this program is to provide consumers with objective, easy-to-understand information to help

them make choices in a competitive electricity market; encourage development of an environmentally preferable electricity market in Ontario; and ensure that consumers can be confident in the variety of marketing claims of environmentally preferable electricity products. Competition is providing choice that was simply not available under the old monopoly. The proposed act would give Ontarians even more ability to choose environmentally friendly sources of power.

I just wanted to say a couple of words on the opening of the market and talk for a few moments about the largest utility in my area, Orillia Power, which has done an amazing job over the last three or four years as we've worked toward opening the market. I'd like to congratulate John Mattinson and his board of directors for the work they've done.

They've also worked very well with the Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in a cogeneration plant they have with the hospital. They take advantage of all the prime times to save as much power as they can in the operation of that hospital, which I might point out to the Minister of Health, who is in attendance here today, is, I think, one of the most efficient hospitals in Ontario. I always like to comment on that when I'm making comments about Soldiers' Memorial Hospital.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): You're absolutely right.

Mr Dunlop: I thank you for saying that, and I'm still lobbying very strongly for our proposed redevelopment that's planned to go ahead later on this fall. I know you've been very supportive in the operating plan you've proposed to us.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to take part in this debate today. I hope to hear a lot more comments from both of the opposition parties as we debate Bill 58, and hope everyone in this House will see fit to pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Colle: I want to thank the member from Simcoe North and the member from Nepean-Carleton.

I guess the name of this act, Bill 58, should be, "We don't really give a damn what Judge Gans or the courts say; we're going to do whatever we want anyway." As you know, Mr Speaker, Judge Gans was brave enough to basically say that what the government was doing in privatizing Ontario Hydro is illegal. But that did not stop this government from proceeding, and they've even drafted an act which basically contravenes what's before the courts and in fact is up to appeal. This government doesn't care if it's before the courts or not; it's going to ram through this legislation and overrule the courts in this province, which is what Bill 58 is all about.

Bill 58 is also about still failing to protect consumers in this province from these door-to-door scam artists who have essentially been let loose on the people of Ontario by this government over the last three years. Thousands of these locusts have been going from door to door ripping off seniors; signing them to gas contracts, electricity contracts; intimidating people; lying to them. In

fact the worst lie of all was perpetrated by this government's own company, Onsource, which went door-to-door and said, "Sign with Ontario's company; 100 years of history." Over 190,000 Ontarians innocently signed with Onsource. But do you know what this Ontario company did, the company of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves? The day before the markets opened on May 1, their company sold 190,000 Ontarians down the drain to a company in Alberta they didn't know about. This bill does not stop and still allows false advertising for the companies this government is in cahoots with, to flip contracts on the eve of anything; still allows it.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Talk about revisionist history. I can't believe some of the things I'm hearing from the members who were speaking about the terrible things that led them to privatize hydro. None of it is true. Yes, we had a debt, which was created under the Tories and the Liberals when decisions were made to build more nuclear plants. Nuclear plants are very, very expensive to build, and people knew at the time that there would be huge deficits but they could be dealt with as they had been dealt with: through the rates. That's why there is such huge debt, not because of severe mismanagement. It was known at the time that nuclear plants' cost overruns—and I want to tell you, although I wasn't here, that New Democrats who were here at the time—Gerry, you would remember this; I think you were here, or were you?—objected to the building of Darlington, expressed concerns about the costs that would be incurred in building that, and it went way over cost.

That is the reality of what happened. Because of, as one of the members said, mismanagement by all three governments—this is now being used as an excuse to have to privatize Hydro One and our generation, when the people of Ontario have made it very clear that they don't want this asset privatized.

Furthermore, the members talk about how privatizing hydro, both transmission and generation, will improve the environment. We've had Greenpeace and other major environmental groups come out and say, in fact, that privatizing hydro is going to make the environment worse. There is nothing in the bill to date that actually enhances the ability for green energy to come on stream and, secondly, the coal-fired plants will now be burning seven days a week, 24 hours a day, spewing out coal so they can sell to the Americans for big profits.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I heard the member from Simcoe North congratulate the energy minister on the occasion of this bill. Let's be clear: this bill is a major embarrassment for this government. The blank-cheque bill has been brought in for two reasons: firstly, they lost a case before Mr Justice Gans and found out—this is the law of Ontario right now—that in fact they have no statutory authority to sell Hydro One. They have no statutory authority to do what they tried to do. It would have been an illegal sale had they proceeded with it. And they're not going to go before the courts and let the courts decide like every other time they have a matter before the courts. They let the matter go through the

courts, whether it be the Ontario Court of Appeal or the Supreme Court of Canada, and then the Legislature responds, if need be. No, no, they're not going to wait for that. They want to get this blank-cheque bill passed quickly so they can do whatever they want this summer in cabinet—not in the Legislature, but in cabinet—and thereby not have it accountable. It's an embarrassment; it's no occasion for congratulations.

Secondly, the second part of this bill is about consumer protection. Surely, we should have had protection for the consumers before the unscrupulous retailers showed up for the door-to-door sales tactics, not after. After literally thousands of Ontarians have been ripped off by some unscrupulous—and I'm not saying every single one, but there are thousands of contracts that are questionable.

So this bill is no occasion for congratulations to the energy minister. I don't know if he deserves congratulations for whipping the blank-cheque bill through in record speed. I don't know. We'll have to see whether the government is going to provide the weeks of hearings that were promised by the Premier of Ontario during question period, but I can tell you that the government should not be patting itself on the back for this particular bill.

1610

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's interesting to me that the member opposite from St Paul's who just spoke believes government shouldn't make laws and rules in the province of Ontario, or I guess in the country of Canada, but that only judges should be able to do that. The decision he referred to of Justice Gans: Justice Gans basically said he didn't think that under the existing statutes we had clear authority to dispose of certain assets, in this case, Hydro One. The government, the members opposite—in both parties—and pretty much everybody in Ontario assumed we did indeed have that ability to dispose of assets we own. People had assumed that was the case for years and years. Everyone, including everyone in this House and the parties opposite, was all surprised at that decision. As I said, the decision was that it wasn't clear in legislation that we had that authority.

Part of this bill, because it is a more expansive bill than just dealing with that authority, clarifies that, through a duly elected government of the people of Ontario, we do indeed have the authority to dispose of and otherwise treat our assets, in this case, Hydro One.

I think it should be clear that the member opposite, by standing up and stating that we shouldn't have this legislation because Justice Gans said we shouldn't sell Hydro One or we don't have the authority to sell Hydro One, is abdicating the government authority we've had in this country for 100 years and more to judges, and we oppose that concept.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has two minutes to respond.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Eglinton-Lawrence, Toronto-Danforth, St Paul's and my

colleague from Niagara for their comments on the earlier debate by Mr Baird and myself.

I'd like, first of all, to in a way congratulate the New Democratic Party. We've known in this House, in the three years I've been here, exactly where that party has stood on opening the market for competition. We know where they stand on competition and the sale or privatization, whatever you want to call it. They've been fairly clear on that. Mr Hampton repeatedly questioned Minister Wilson on a number of occasions in this House, and we're very satisfied where their stand is: they're against everything.

Meanwhile, over the last three years, since I've been here—by the way, before I got here, in 1996, 1997 and 1998 I was involved in a lot of meetings on opening the market, particularly Bill 35 and the Energy Competition Act. Mr Wilson had consultations throughout this province, and electrical associations from around the province and municipalities were involved in many of those meetings.

The Liberal Party, though, has been so silent on the opening of the market. They obviously agree with that; they agreed with the market opening on May 1, and we've got all kinds of quotes over the last two or three years saying that. But when it comes to the privatization, we have no idea where they stand. They flip-flop all over the place, as Mr McGuinty did on December 12. The fact of the matter is—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): How many positions have you had on Hydro One in the last week?

Mr Dunlop: Here we have the member from wherever chirping away again.

The fact of the matter is, that party has continually flip-flopped all over the place on this issue. Here we are—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, come to order.

Mr Dunlop: I appreciated the opportunity to take part in the debate today.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to continue the debate on Bill 58, a bill that will allow the government essentially to do whatever they want with Hydro One. I'll get into some details on it, but I think it's unfortunate the government doesn't have the courage to say, "Here's what we want to do with Hydro One and we will bring a bill before the Legislature that will permit us to do it." Instead, what they're doing with this bill is essentially cutting the public out of this issue. They're saying, "We are going to pass legislation that will allow us to do whatever we want and the Legislature will have no opportunity to debate that."

If you want to know why the public are getting increasingly cynical about politics and politicians, it's for that reason.

I'm sorry, Mr Speaker, I should also say I'm going to be sharing my time with the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora. I should have said that earlier.

I suspect most of the government members, before they got elected, would never have supported something like this. If any of the members of the government had ever thought when they were coming down here that they were going to essentially shut the public out, I suspect many wouldn't have run. So I find it wrong that the government is asking, demanding, forcing the Legislature to give them essentially a blank cheque.

My comments today are going to be focused on Hydro One and, frankly, the damage it has done to the reputation of the province of Ontario and, dare I say, to Mr Eves and the government, starting with this—by the way, I think all Ontario realizes this is our major asset. This is one of the jewels in Ontario. This is a hugely important asset for Ontario. This affects every single person in Ontario. Few assets are more important. But the government couldn't even get the legislation right to give itself the authority to sell it. We are now in an international arena. We're the laughingstock of the financial community in North America. It's the largest asset the government and Mr Eves, the big business person, were going to sell off and the government couldn't even get it right to give itself the legal authority. The courts threw it out.

I come now to the issue that's dominated the discussion around Hydro One over the last few days and that is the board of Hydro One and the government's relationship to it. I make this charge: I believe the government knew every single thing that was going on at Hydro One. I believe the board kept the government totally involved every step of the way. I believe the government knew exactly, every step of the way, the things that were going on and the government only decided to act to fire the board when they got caught. The board was doing exactly what the government wanted them to do.

The evidence of that is this: first, every single board member was hand-picked by the government. Mr Eves at the time was Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, the person who purportedly had his hands on the controls of the government. He bragged that every week he met with Mr Harris and nothing happened without his approval. They hand-picked every single member. I can only assume that the government gave them clear direction on what was supposed to happen at Hydro One and got agreement from the board that they would do it. This isn't some rogue group of people appointed by some other government. Mr Eves's hands are all over this.

Second, the former Minister of Energy, Mr Wilson, has told us publicly that he met on a regular basis—in fact, he bragged about it—with the chairman of OPG. He said, "I had a set time every week when I'd meet with them." Mr Wilson would brag that he could influence the board, get them to do things. Nothing happened without Mr Wilson being aware of it.

Then, when the controversy hit in the last few days, suddenly, instead of being the person who was in charge of that board, providing direction, managing it, proudly saying he was in charge of it, Mr Wilson said, "Well, every time I mentioned these abhorrent"—and that's his word—"salaries, they'd simply increase them some more." Now, what are we to believe there? If in fact the board of Hydro One—and this, by the way, Mr Wilson said, was taking place 24 months ago and 18 months ago. If we're to believe that—in other words, that Mr Wilson, representing all of the taxpayers out there, on our behalf, representing the shareholders, is finding the board acting in an abhorrent fashion—wouldn't any reasonable person expect on our behalf that there would be a letter to the board from Mr Wilson, Minister of Energy, and perhaps the Deputy Premier at the time, Mr Eves, saying, "Listen, this is unacceptable. We are ordering you to stop it"? Wouldn't there be some minutes of Mr Wilson meeting with the board and saying on behalf of the shareholders, "I'm going to order you to do it"? There isn't any of that. Why? Why isn't there? We asked the question today of the Minister of Energy and he of course, in a serious matter such as this, is more likely to just bluster and say things that in my opinion have little to do with the facts and more to do with bluster. He refused to answer that.

1620

So I say to the people of Ontario that, firstly, the dismissed board is telling us that they assumed they were carrying out the orders of the government. Mr Wilson, the Minister of Energy, being with them, they assumed they were following directions, and the evidence is this: no piece of correspondence from the government to the board until last week—nothing. So that's one other piece of evidence.

I disagree fundamentally with the salaries given to the senior officers there. I find that totally unacceptable. But as far as the board was concerned, they were acting under the direction of the government, in accordance with the government. There is no evidence that I've seen yet, anywhere from the government, that that wasn't the case. The only letter the government has to the board was dated last week.

We raised the issue about the salaries here on May 15, and Mr Stockwell said, "As soon as I was briefed back in April, I was so outraged about these things that I immediately got outraged." We raised this issue here on May 15 about the \$6-million severance package and the pension. Mr Stockwell in his answer never said one single thing about the salary. You can check the Hansard. Nothing. Zero. He was so outraged back there at that first briefing, outraged, and nothing happened—no letter to the board. We're told today that he was so outraged that he informed the Premier several weeks later. He was so outraged that he never responded on May 15, when we raised this in the Legislature.

So my charge is this: the board is saying publicly, and I believe the evidence supports this, that the government knew every step of the way what was going on. They appointed them, hand-picked, with a good deal of brag-

ging about this wonderful group. I can only assume that the government provided them with the necessary direction and the board said, "Yes, we will follow that."

Until last week, we had not seen one single piece of evidence that the government disagreed with the board. Now what's happening, frankly, is that the government is the laughingstock of the business community. You had a board that you picked, that thought they were following your directions. Then, when they got caught doing something the public didn't like but which the board thought you wanted them to do, you fire them and make them take the fall for you. Frankly, in my opinion the board shouldn't have done that, but they thought they were operating in conjunction with the government. You have completely bungled this and are making it worse with bluster and with bravado, and not with a sense of the importance of Hydro One to the province.

I think you'll get caught. I think eventually the truth will come out. We're going to have trouble getting it because the board members can't sue; because you're refusing to allow us to have a committee; because you're trying to stonewall this and you won't let us call the witnesses. But some day it will come out that the board at every step of the way operated with the approval of the government. They're taking the fall and the government thinks they can escape. I don't think it's going to happen.

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): I express my appreciation to my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt for allowing me to take some time. I don't, given some of my other responsibilities, get a lot of time to speak in this Legislature and I'm particularly pleased, therefore, to have time to speak on this bill.

The reason I say that is because I have a sneaking suspicion that when historians look back on this time and they look back on the next election and the defeat of the Conservative government under Premier Ernie Eves, what they're going to be writing about in great detail is how the Eves government lost its way and bungled things, particularly on the business of Ontario Hydro, and how they damaged that asset and turned an asset that is the single most valuable asset that the people of Ontario own into a political tool. I want to talk about that for a moment and I want to talk about—

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Is this your maiden speech?

Mr Sorbara: I gave my maiden speech several years before you arrived here, my friend.

I want to talk about how this government, on Hydro One, reflects a kind of arrogance and loss of direction that will ultimately bring them down to defeat.

So what's this bill about? It's the government saying, "Judge Gans said we can't sell it, so we need a piece of legislation to say we can sell it." You know something? Let's look at when the government started their waffling on Hydro One. The former Premier, Mike Harris, announced in this Legislature to enormous applause from that side of the House that Hydro One was going to be sold to private shareholders by way of an IPO. From that moment we had the resignation of Mike Harris; after that

we had a leadership debate. Was there one dissenting voice among all the leadership candidates about whether or not Hydro One should be sold by way of an IPO? Not one of them—not Ernie Eves, not Jim Flaherty, not the current Minister of Energy, Chris Stockwell. They all said, "Yes, great. It fits in with our pattern that the only good thing is a private thing. Look how we privatized Highway 407," for \$7 billion less than it was worth.

Not one of those leadership candidates made any mention of their opposition to the privatization of Hydro One. Not one of them expressed any concern about the management of Hydro One. Not one of them mentioned their concern about the salaries of the president and CEO of Hydro One. They all had to know about those salaries. Those salaries ultimately get approved by the shareholders. This business of Chris Stockwell saying, "I didn't know until May 9"—did he ever go to a cabinet meeting? Did the then Minister of Energy ever read his briefings? Shareholders approve salaries of senior executives, no matter what authority the board has. They knew about it and they knew about it back then. During the leadership campaign, not a word. They all thought it was a great idea: "We're going to privatize Hydro One."

So when did the conversion on the road to Damascus actually take place? If you read the history of the past couple of months, it's clear and evident. Ernie Eves won the leadership. Ernie Eves needed a seat in the Legislature. Mike Harris resigned his seat in the Legislature. There was to be a by-election in Nipissing; two by-elections. I don't know about you, Mr Speaker, but I worked in both of those by-elections and every day on the campaign trail I heard voters in Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey and I heard voters in Nipissing saying, "I can't abide the idea that this government is selling our transmission system." I heard it every single day. In Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey we had a young, bright candidate who had never run before and day after day people came up to him and said, "Josh Matlow, I'm going to vote for you. I am so angry about the sale of Hydro One," five days before election.

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Now I'm going to quote Premier Eves. He said, "Hydro One is not off the table; it's off the table for now." Let's translate that into English. In English that means "I'm in deep trouble trying to get a seat in the Legislature and holding on to Mike Harris's former seat. I'm going to take it off the table or I'm going to lose two by-elections." When you turn the province's business into short-term, two-bit political expediency, you lose your way, and that's exactly what happened. Was it coincidental that on the day of the by-elections, May 2, every major newspaper said, "Eves Takes Hydro One Privatization Off the Table"?

Now that he's elected and the Legislature has returned, suddenly we have a bill before this Legislature saying, "Do you know what? If we didn't have the authority according to the Superior Court of Ontario, we're going to give ourselves the authority." So now, the by-elections being over, it's back on the table. The course

is clear again: privatization is the order of the day. But it is this theme that is going to bring the Conservative government in Ontario to defeat in the next election, because what is important to them is not the public interest; it's private interests.

It's private interests that are now making a fortune on Highway 407. It's private interests that have had preference in education in Ontario—no money for public education; \$500 million for private education. If our friend Jim Flaherty, now the minister of not very much at all, were there, we would have private liquor stores. We're going to have private universities. It is that philosophy, that loss of interest in what is good in the public interest, that will ultimately bring them down.

If you examine the history of the past seven years, it's pretty clear what's happened. The private interests, that 20% at the top of the socio-economic ladder, the elite, have frankly done magnificently under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, and Eleanor Clitheroe's salary is just one clear example of that. The elite not only have thrived, they've had a field day under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves.

The 60% in the middle have been squeezed and squeezed. It's harder for them to pay the bills and the mortgage, their education and health care systems are poorer, the care of their frail and elderly is poorer, day care has been cut. The great middle class in Ontario has been squeezed to feed the rich in Ontario over the past seven years.

The 20% at the bottom—the frail, the elderly, the homeless, the poor, the dispossessed—have seen Ontario become a living hell for them.

That's the history of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves in Ontario. The privatization of Hydro One and Eleanor Clitheroe's salary will stand as symbols in the next election. People will see those symbols and they'll say, "We want to bring an end to that era when private interests drive the public agenda in Ontario." That's what's going to happen, and Ontarians will welcome a new generation of political leadership where the public interest and the public good will once again return to centre stage in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Ms Churley: In response to both of the Liberals who have spoken, I want to point out to the members that one of the government's justifications for going ahead with this privatization scheme that nobody wants—they're saying they still don't know exactly whether it's going to be sold off through an IPO or there might be some non-profit company set up. I have never seen such incompetence and mismanagement in this Legislature since I've been here, since 1990. I find it astounding.

If you look back through old Hansards and see some of the comments that party made when the NDP was in government trying to turn the big ship Hydro around—we all agree there were some problems that needed to be fixed, not in the transmission area but on the generation side—members of the third party, who were then the Conservatives, got up and went after Bob Rae time and

time again about his incompetence, his inability to turn it around, and on and on.

I find it very ironic. Who did the government turn to, to try to fix part of the big mess they'd created, part of the incredible, indefensible salaries and bonuses employees are making at Hydro One? Who did they go to, to try to fix the mess they created? Bob Rae. I find that truly ironic.

They must admit today that they've been incompetent, that they don't know what they're doing, that they've created a big mess. They're creating, with absolutely no justification, something that nobody in Ontario wants. They say that every cent that's made if they sell Hydro One would go back into paying the debt. If you look at what's really being said, a large portion of that money will be kept for general revenue.

Mr Maves: I actually hope people were at home listening for the last 20 minutes. I hope they had a bit of politics on their minds, because the two speakers you heard from the Liberal caucus just now are two people who are considered, I guess, all-stars, two of the leading guys in the Liberal Party opposite. They just had 20 minutes to talk about a bill that would protect consumers from unscrupulous retailers, that would protect corridor lands where transmission lines run, that would force governments—all governments—to pay down debt from any disposition of Hydro One assets, and that would protect the environment.

Do you know that neither one of those gentlemen even mentioned this bill or any of the content of this bill? We've got no idea where they stand on this bill. Do they want to protect the consumers? I guess they don't. Do they want to protect corridor lands? I thought previously they had said they did, but apparently not. Do they support paying down the debt with the proceeds of the sales? I don't know. Their whole speech was a bunch of empty rhetoric, hateful personal attacks and fearmongering.

Mr Sorbara: That's what you get from all-stars.

Mr Maves: The member opposite is now bragging, "Yes, that's what we did and that's why we're all-stars, because we're all about empty rhetoric, hateful personal attacks and fearmongering."

I want people to know that, while I think the NDP is also quite often filled with a lot of empty rhetoric, at least the NDP states positions on things. At least they consistently do that. At least they consistently talk about bills when they're before the Legislature. I hope the public at home watched that performance from the members opposite.

The Acting Speaker: I just want to explain that I do not censor. I do not decide what is true and what isn't true on what you say. If you want me to, then put that in the standing orders and I'll gladly do that. But until then, you're all honourable members; you're expected to put your ideas in debate, and it's my job to make sure you do that according to the rules as you've asked me to do.

With that, you have two minutes for comments and questions.

Mr Colle: I appreciate that, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on the very sage interventions on the part of the member for Scarborough-Agincourt and the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora.

I think the cogent comment they made was the reference to and the context of Highway 407. This is the government and the Minister of Finance who gave away one of the largest assets in Ontario history for \$7 billion under market price. Now they're telling us in the Legislature, "Trust us with Ontario Hydro, with Hydro One." The same minister, Minister Eves, the Minister of Finance, gave away a highway for \$7 billion under market price, and now he's saying, "Trust us with what we're going to do with our hydro." There's no way the people of Ontario trust this Premier now, who originally said he would sell Hydro One and then, on the eve of the by-election—not on the road to Damascus but on the road to Dufferin county—he realized he wouldn't get elected unless he made this false announcement, saying, "Hydro One sale off the table"—front page of the Toronto Star, front page of the National Post. Two days before the by-election in Dufferin-Peel he said, "Hydro sale off"; he said, "Trust me." This from the same Minister of Finance who gave away the 407. On the road to Dufferin county he said he was not going to sell it. Then he brings back a bill, Bill 58, with the Minister of Energy and says, "Oh, we are now going to forget what the Superior Court of Ontario and Judge Gans said. We don't care what the court says. We make up our own laws." The people of Ontario have to obey the laws, but not this government.

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Mr Kormos: I have but two minutes to respond to the capable comments that have been made during the course of debate. In short order you're going to be hearing from Marilyn Churley, the member from Toronto-Danforth. You've heard from Howard Hampton. I spoke to the bill. Marilyn Churley, our environmental critic, is going to speak about the serious environmental consequences of the privatization of hydro, whether it's the transmission end or the generation end.

You talked about the prospect of revisions to the standing orders, were you to be called upon to determine the veracity of any given comment. We'd have to call you Diogenes, then; we'd have to get you a lamp. I have had occasion from time to time, knowing full well what the rules are, to note that—think about this conundrum—it's OK to lie in the Legislature, but it's not OK to call someone a liar, is it? It's against the rules to call someone a liar but it's not against the rules to lie. I've always found that to be one of the paradoxes, one of the contradictions here.

So rather than suggesting that anybody has been lying, I have—

The Acting Speaker: As a matter of fact, you can't even use that term in this House. So I'll ask you to go on. You've made your point three times.

Mr Kormos: Rather than making that suggestion, I have had occasion to comment that were Diogenes to be

here with his lamp, he would be wandering back and forth, back and forth rather fecklessly. Think about the image of Diogenes looking and looking and looking—that endless pursuit—and the lamp burning on and on until the oil gets lower and lower and the flame starts to flicker. This would be an awfully lonely place for Diogenes on certain days.

Marilyn Churley of Toronto-Danforth will be speaking to this bill shortly this afternoon. I encourage people to pay close attention to her comments.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Vaughan-King-Aurora has two minutes to respond.

Mr Sorbara: First I'd like to reiterate the comments made by my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt that, given what has happened with our hydroelectric system, this government is becoming an embarrassment on Bay Street and on Main Street and across Ontario and Canada and, frankly, in world markets, because they represent a shining but horrible example of a government that will be driven into making decisions on public policy by the expedient political needs of the day.

Sir, 100 years ago a great Conservative named Adam Beck created a unique, at that time, and enormously successful organization called Ontario Hydro. Ninety years after that, an NDP government started to reorganize it. It is an embarrassment to Adam Beck and it's an embarrassment to good governance that the Conservative government under Ernie Eves has done such serious and perhaps irreparable damage to the organization that was created by a Conservative almost 100 years ago.

We're going to put it back together; there will be a time. But for right now, the point of my remarks and those of my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt is that the horrible manner in which this government has handled this brief will come back in the next election to haunt the government and, I believe, ultimately lead to its defeat.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Maves: Before I get into the total of my remarks, it was interesting that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt thought that this government since 1995 had changed its mind and not done what it said it would do. It's just quite comical, when everyone in Ontario knows that a large part of the election in 1999 was somewhat of a referendum by the people of Ontario to say, "They did what they said they would do. Did we like it or not like it?" Based on that, this government was re-elected.

When Premier Harris retired as the Premier of Ontario, you can go back and read the papers and see some of the news clips from the day when he announced his retirement and the following days. Even his staunchest critics, including members from the Liberal and NDP parties, praised him for doing one thing in politics that will always stand out, and that was that politicians could now be held to their word. They could be held to, "Did they do what they said they would do?"

For the member opposite to get up and complain that this government is somehow reducing people's confidence in politicians—I say to him, you should have a

look at your cousins in Ottawa. If you want to find a group of guys who over the years have ruined the public's faith in politicians, look at your cousins in Ottawa—your friends, or brothers and sisters actually.

As I said, the members opposite never even touched upon this bill, so we've got no idea if they're in favour of consumer protection, if they're in favour of making sure that the disposition of any assets of Hydro One, which is something that the bill allows, will get paid down on the debt—we have no idea of their positions on that.

I want to talk about something, and believe me, Speaker, it is relevant to the debate at hand. I want to talk to people about the Ontario Apple Generation Co. About 120 years ago—and, yes, this is a fictional story—it was decided that producing apples for consumption, for apple pies, for whatever, that building an orchard was too expensive—I'm sorry; the table's looking at me like I'm crazy, but they might get my point in a bit—for any one private individual or private company to build these apple orchards to supply the people of Ontario with apples. So they decided to make a public entity, a public monopoly, of apple orchards. They built apple orchards and it was going to supply apples at cost to the people of Ontario.

As the years went on, this public monopoly built more and more orchards and did supply apples to the people of Ontario. However, as the years went by, as always happens with monopolies, and the world shows this in every instance, that apple monopoly became more and more bloated. More and more cousins were hired and more and more brothers and sons were hired and they had way more staff than was required to do the job. There were inflexible work arrangements and work rules so that efficiencies were very poor. Because it was a monopoly, it didn't have to compete for selling apples against any other apple producers; they were just able to raise the price of those apples year after year to pay for these inefficiencies.

As time went on, the public looked around and said, "You know what? Apples don't cost this much in other places around the world. In other places around the world there is competition for apple production, and private companies can produce apples." So they said, "You know what? Let other people produce apples." So somebody finally said, "All right, we'll let someone else produce apples," and when they did, what happened? Well, the private sector could produce the apples. They produced thousands more apples and, lo and behold, they could produce them for a lower price, they could produce them more efficiently and the price of apples came down in Ontario.

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Also at the time, they developed the Ontario apple transmission company. They didn't want to transmit apples through private trucking companies, so they came up with their own trucking company, a fleet of vans and trucks to deliver the apples around Ontario. The same thing happened with that monopoly. Over the years it became bloated. There were too many staff and it was too

inefficient, and somebody eventually said, "Why don't we let all these other trucking companies around the province in on the ability to truck these apples?" Eventually they did that. They sold off their fleet and rid Ontario of these two monopolies. They had a much more efficient apple system. More apples were produced at lower prices, and industries boomed because of that.

It's obviously a fictional story, but a story that demonstrates what has happened in this province over the years with Hydro. We did have this public monopoly, which was necessary at the beginning because capital costs were too high to produce hydro for this province, and for many years that public monopoly served us well. But no matter what party you were from and no matter what your political philosophy was, everyone knew that old monopoly had become inefficient and needed fixing.

In 1995-96 we appointed the Macdonald commission to look into Hydro. Even though everyone for so many years had been saying, "Open it up to competition. Let other people generate and sell that power on the grid," we still had another commission, and they told us that very same thing. So finally we did move to open up the energy market. It opened up to competition this year and, lo and behold, the average price of power in Ontario is down over 30% in the first month of the opening.

We also moved forward and we decided: we have this transmission system. The old monopoly, for a variety of reasons—because of cost overruns, as some members have said in the past in this Legislature, but also because that old, inefficient monopoly couldn't cover its costs, so debt was added when it couldn't cover its costs.

Even though over the years the price went up—I know that from 1985 to 1993, when the members opposite were in office, the Ontario Hydro price went up 93%; that's right, 93%. In fact, I remember the very early 1990s, when the NDP were in office. Before they froze hydro rates, Bob Rae, the then Premier, was considered the businessman of the year in Buffalo, because so many businesses said, "We can get lower taxes, we can get lower hydro rates in Buffalo, right across the border." A lot of people went there. I know manufacturing facilities in Niagara Falls that left in that five-year period precisely because they were being overtaxed and over-regulated and had to pay higher and higher compensation costs and higher and higher hydro rates. So we did have a flight of jobs.

As I said, since the market has opened—we trusted that, we trusted the market, we trusted competition, as so many people before us have also done and as so many people advised governments previously to do—indeed the price of power has come down. The price of power will fluctuate. There will be days when—the law of supply and demand—demand will be higher because of heat and because people will turn on their air conditioners, and you will see the price go up. We have already seen the price go from a penny a kilowatt hour to seven cents a kilowatt hour. That's in the middle of the day when everyone is using the most power. But on average the

price of power is down dramatically, and it's that average price that matters most.

There was even a situation before we opened it up. I have many large power-consuming companies in my riding: Norton, a ceramics company; Washington Mills; Abitibi Paper in Thorold—a whole variety of large major power consumers in the Niagara area. They came there originally because we had cheap power, but over the years that cheap power advantage was lost. I used to say to them, "Why don't you guys just produce your own power? It's really not that difficult any more to do a cogeneration facility." The reason why a lot of those companies which had considered making a major investment to produce their own power so they wouldn't have to be a price-taker from the one person who could sell power in Ontario, Ontario Hydro—the reason they didn't was because they would produce more power than they could use and then they would have nothing to do with it, no place to sell that excess power.

When we opened up the market, there are all kinds of people who produce their own power who now can put their power on the grid. In fact, they're not just big companies. There are very small producers of energy that can now put their excess power into the market and that's what's helping to keep the rate lower.

Premier Eves asked Minister Stockwell to go out and consult on the future of Hydro One after the justice's decision that we didn't have the right, on behalf of the people of the province of Ontario, to dispose of some assets, and he went out and consulted with people. I was at the hearings in Niagara Falls and I know Mr Kormos was there also. One of the things people clearly said they needed in this new era of electricity, open markets, open competition and the government of Ontario perhaps no longer being the owner of transmission, was, "We want more protection for consumers from unscrupulous retailers."

Members opposite have talked about actual criminal stories, of people forging people's names on documents. I hope that the members opposite, when they run into that, are actually reporting those incidents to the police, because those are criminal activities. But one of the things the public has said is, "We want more protection from unscrupulous retailers." In fact, Bill 58 that we are discussing today does just that.

What else did we hear? We also heard that a lot of people were concerned about and wanted to see the protection of the corridor lands. Through all communities in Ontario you see the big transmission lines of Hydro One that transmit power to consumers. They wanted to make sure those corridors were protected. In fact, I think the city of Toronto and probably other municipalities said they're very important public assets and we need them protected. This legislation, Bill 58, also does that.

A lot of people said, "If you sell Hydro One assets and let the OEB regulate the rates that are charged," just like in the gas industry, which is a highly regulated industry and the pipelines are not owned by the public, "if you do go that route, what we want to make sure of is that any

proceeds you get from the sale of assets go to paying down the \$38-billion debt that old monopoly of Ontario Hydro has left the people of Ontario." Again, this bill, Bill 58, makes it clear that that is what will happen.

People also have a great deal of concern about the environment. One of the great things, quite frankly, about opening up the market and allowing other generators is that we're getting wind generation now, we're getting solar generation and we're getting cleaner forms of generation coming into the market that weren't allowed before. It's very environmentally friendly to say to people, "Look, instead of just having old Ontario Hydro's power on the grid, all of these other forms of power can now come on the grid and be sold." We want that green energy, and more of that green energy is now being supplied. There are some amendments to the Lakes and Rivers Improvement Act in this bill which will help us protect the environment further.

These are all important things that are in Bill 58 and, as I said at the outset and actually in some of my earlier comments, it's important that when a judge decided we didn't have clear authority to do what we wanted with the assets that everybody else—most people in Ontario and, I believe, the members opposite also—believed we had, which was the right to dispose of certain assets held by the crown, this bill does give us that ability.

When Minister Stockwell went out, people also said, "We may not want you to sell 100% of Hydro One. Maybe you should look at some other options. Maybe you should look at selling a percentage of it. Maybe you should look at an income trust. Maybe you should look at a long-term lease." They wanted you to consider more of those options, and the minister and the Premier have said they're open to looking at all of those options. They've done that.

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This simply clarifies that if we sell, if at the end of the day the decision is taken to sell all of Hydro One, it gives us the legal authority to do it, as we thought we had and as most people thought we had. If we decided to sell 49% of it, it would be clear that we had the authority to do that. So that's a new thing.

Will we go forward and do that? That remains to be seen. There are a lot of very learned people who have said the best thing to do with the transmission lines and Hydro One is an IPO, to sell the shares and let the private sector bring some discipline to what is currently Hydro One. The members opposite, with all their complaints about Hydro One and OPG lately, are maybe signalling that, yes, maybe there does need to be some discipline brought to bear on these companies.

As I said, Donald Macdonald, who did the study for us in 1995-96, a former Liberal cabinet minister, is very supportive of the sale of Hydro One. Jan Carr, an Acres engineer—Acres is one of the leading engineering firms for hydroelectric projects across the province—sat on that committee and he believes the sale of Hydro One is the right way to go. AMPCO, the Association of Major Power Consumers of Ontario, is very supportive of the

move to open up the markets and they are going to be among the chief beneficiaries of that. The Ontario Energy Association is supportive. Energy Probe's Tom Adams is a gentleman who's very learned on Hydro matters and is often quoted in the papers and on the radio and is a keen observer in matters of Hydro in the province. He believes it's the right thing to do. Maurice Strong, former NDP-appointed chairman of Ontario Hydro, believes it's the right way to go.

President Don MacKinnon of the Power Workers' Union: they have even taken out ads that say "Public Offering Best Way to Meet Hydro One's Investment Needs" in the future. They believe we should proceed with the IPO because, and I quote from their ad, "No government—current or future—will underwrite the billions of dollars that will be needed to ensure the necessary maintenance and expansion of the Hydro One system. An IPO brings needed investment while giving Ontarians a chance to invest in the future of the company."

They say, "Continuing with effective regulation—there's more regulation now than ever before. The result is good for customers.... The Ontario Energy Board now has the power and the expertise to regulate the wires sector by setting rates and ensuring service levels."

They finish off in their ad by saying, "Members of the Power Workers' Union are electricity customers just like everyone else. We too depend on a strong, safe 'electric highway' system. Investment, not rhetoric, will ensure the system is maintained and the high value services our members provide continue. The debate isn't about public versus private—it's about investment and jobs."

I commend Mr MacKinnon and the Power Workers' Union because a forward-looking and aggressive position like that is probably something that's not looked on that favourably by the rest of the labour movement. In fact, it wasn't the Power Workers' Union that went to court to try to stop the disposition and the IPO of Hydro One at all. As you can see, they're in favour. It was other unions—CUPE. I'm quite happy that the Power Workers' Union is looking to the future to turn OPG and Hydro One, in whatever form it ends up taking, into aggressive, growing companies, with investment that will protect the jobs of the people who work there for many years to come.

I commend them for taking the step they've taken. I've talked to many people, obviously in Niagara Falls, which is the birthplace of Hydro, and a lot of people still work for Ontario Hydro. I've spoken to a lot of them. They're really reforming their systems within OPG and Hydro One, because they want to be aggressive, they want to be a successful company and they want to sell power, not only in Ontario but in other parts of the world. I commend them for that. It's not that recoil-in-fear attitude that exists in so many other social democratic circles, so I commend them for that.

Those are my comments on the bill. I look forward to hearing the thoughts of the rest of my colleagues in the Legislature on Bill 58.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Colle: Thank you so much, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity to comment on the member for Niagara Falls. I notice the member referred to Bob Rae being made the businessman of the year when he was Premier.

Mr Maves: Of Buffalo.

Mr Colle: Yes, Buffalo. But it seems his Premier is now going to appoint Bob Rae, I think the same Bob Rae, to run Hydro One. I don't know if he's heard that. Member for Niagara Falls, you said there was something wrong with Bob Rae, businessman of the year in Buffalo. Now your Premier is saying that was not true. Bob Rae did a great job and he's now going to run Hydro One.

Ms Churley: He's going to fix up our mess for us.

Mr Colle: Yes. So the guy who destroyed the province and whom they rant and rave about has just been given a plum job by the Premier. So all the stuff we've heard about Bob Rae from the government side is something they didn't believe in and were just talking about. But the latest news is Premier Eves is bringing in Bob Rae to bail out Hydro One.

Not only that, he's going to team up with Pink Floyd, who's now running the Ontario Energy Board. The two of them are running Hydro now. The Ontario Energy Board is that toothless tiger that has only four inspectors for the whole province of Ontario to inspect over two million contracts in gas and electricity. The government of Ernie Eves is asking Floyd Laughren and Bob Rae basically to get them out of the mess they're in.

I'm looking forward to the next member on the Conservative side standing up here and saying, "We were wrong about Bob Rae. We were wrong about Floyd Laughren. We made a mistake and we're bringing them in to bail us out of a mess we created with Ontario Hydro." So Floyd Laughren is there at the Ontario Energy Board and Bob Rae is now going to run Hydro One. Please explain this to me.

Mr Kormos: The decision, the proposal, the proposition of selling off Hydro One—Ontario Hydro, Hydro One and the generating section of it—is probably the most dramatic decision that will be made in this province. It will have long-lasting consequences. When we reflect on the impact of NAFTA, we may never be able to restore ownership of Ontario hydroelectricity to the people of this province. If we do, it will be very painful, expensive and difficult.

Yet this government is shutting down the debate as of 6 pm this evening. I have just been served with a notice of motion which is the most disgusting and obscene affront and assault to democracy, and a clear and deliberate effort to exorcise what has been a strong opposition to this bill and the sell-off of Ontario Hydro. This notice of motion is shutting down debate as of 6 pm this evening. There will not be another second of second reading debate. It provides for so-called committee hearings that mock the public. This government holds the people of this province in disdain, and it's the content of this notice of motion, this time allocation motion that I've been served with, that illustrates that. That is the evidence of

that. Third reading? Sixty minutes in total, 20 minutes per caucus, to debate third reading after so-called committee hearings. A mere handful of half-days for committee hearings, access to virtually—not virtually; no access to the north, modest access to a couple of places outside Toronto. This is a disgusting betrayal by this government of the interests of the people of this province.

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Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Perhaps we could add some light rather than darkness to the debate here. We've had an awful lot of bluster from our members opposite. The member for Niagara Centre is great at dramatizing that time allocation is an obscene, disgusting matter, and yet this morning—if you want to shed some real light on the discussion of the whole Hydro One issue or the old Ontario Hydro, all you've got to do is get a copy of the Provincial Auditor's report that came to the public accounts committee, which in essence asked, "What kind of a deal was there behind the Bruce nuclear transaction of 2000?" This whole investigation was undertaken by a motion made by the member for Nickel Belt because she suspected very strongly that there would be some problems, some mystery, about Hydro One, about Ontario Power Generation and the whole British Energy deal.

Guess what? The question that was asked by the auditor was whether the auction was conducted in a manner that resulted in a competitive bidding process and the highest bid being accepted. Guess what conclusion he came to, which completely took the sails out of these contenders across the way? The report said the process was honestly conducted; a professional, sound, business-like approach.

The next question asked, which is still open because it's an ongoing exercise here, is, "Did the taxpayer receive fundamental value for this deal?" There's no doubt about it. If you contrast the reactors that are open compared to the ones under the nuclear Bruce, they aren't open, and that's contributing not a penny to the stranded debt.

Mr Bryant: I'm just looking at this notice of motion for Bill 58. It obviously affects the bill that's before the House right now. This is remarkable. Not only is the government refusing to give the Legislature the last word, engaging in an affront to democracy and a real perversion of the parliamentary process by giving the executive a blank cheque to determine the future of Hydro One instead of having the guts to bring the issue to this House and having MPPs vote it up or down—one way or another, up or down. In fact, the government can't do that. One of the reasons they can't do that, interestingly, is I don't think they could get the support of this caucus. I don't think this caucus would support Hydro One privatization. So they want to have a shield.

But to make matters worse, they're going to bring a guillotine motion, a debate-killing motion, an anti-democratic motion, to help move along the anti-democratic bill. It's the blank-cheque motion for the blank-cheque bill.

Yet again—I can't believe it—the Premier says one thing one day and then he says something else the next day. Remember in question period he said we're going to have weeks of committee hearings? Do you know how many weeks of committee hearings we're going to have? Zero. They don't even have one week of committee hearings. He said we'd get weeks, and we didn't even get one week of committee hearings. He promised full consultations; we don't get full consultations. He said that it was on the table and then he said it was off the table and then, guess what now? It's back on the table again. He said we'd have weeks of committee hearings and full debate in this Legislature and now comes the guillotine motion, now comes the debate-killing motion. This government has got to be the most anti-democratic government in the history of this country. It's got to be.

Mr Maves: You know, it's interesting. The members opposite and the NDP really started and embraced time allocation motions as a way to have bills proceed through the legislative process over the years. We also debate things and we can see that the opposition doesn't intend to let them proceed, so now and then you have to bring in a time allocation motion. It's just really comical, if anyone who watches on a regular basis at home has seen this routine put on before by the member from Niagara Centre and the members from the Liberal Party.

What's really funny about it this time is that in the time we've debated it so far, none of them has even spoken about the bill. If we had more time to debate the bill, what would they talk about? They haven't talked about the bill yet, so why would we believe that with more time they're going to start talking about the bill?

The member for Eglinton-Lawrence asked about Bob Rae. He should realize, if he was a bit more keen an observer of politics, that somewhere along when Bob Rae was Premier of Ontario, he had a bit of change of heart about his socialist leanings. Some of the socialist members of his caucus will tell you about that. Not only that, but ever since Mr Rae has been in the private sector—I caught him on CPAC one day speaking to an audience in the United States in favour of free trade, in fact mocking the Americans for tariffs. If the member could be a little keener observer of politics, he'd realize Mr Rae has had a sea change in his socialist beliefs that he once held so dear. Those are the comments I'd like to make.

My colleague Mr Hastings made a great point—the auditor's report on Bruce today was very interesting. Because of Bruce Power, we have \$1.2 billion of investment in the sector that we wouldn't have had, thousands more megawatt hours and a lower price because they've got more power in the grid.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Colle: As you know, Mr Speaker, this government is again trying to block us from asking questions about this bill. It is cutting off debate at six o'clock today. It has done it over 40 times. The most cutting off of debate in Ontario's history has been done by this government.

They don't want the people of Ontario to know what they're doing here. They want to ram this through, be-

cause they don't want us to talk about the mess they've created with Hydro. They don't want us to ask questions about the salaries they gave their friends. Ron Osborne, who runs Ontario Power Generation, \$2.3 million—they don't want to talk about his salary, his car allowance, his vacation pay. We can't talk about that. That's why they want to cut off debate.

They don't want us to talk about Eleanor Clitheroe's yacht, her \$172,000 car allowance. That's why they're stopping this debate. They're embarrassed by the fact that for three years they gave Ron Osborne and Eleanor Clitheroe whatever they wanted. If they wanted a fancy Aston Martin to drive, they got it from this government. If they wanted a yacht, they got it. This is what they were giving the people who ran Ontario Hydro.

This government gave them gross things at the expense of the taxpayer, who meanwhile was being subjected to harassment by this government and its door-to-door agents who were milking Ontarians of millions by forcing them to sign contracts for gas, forcing them to sign electricity contracts under false pretences. For three years this government condoned that and allowed it to happen. They did the same thing with a bill they passed in 1998 called the Electricity Act, where they made legal all this door-to-door hustling illegality.

Then we heard this government today scoffing at the Ontario Superior Court decision. The same government that allowed door-to-door illegalities is saying the Ontario Superior Court should be ignored. They're saying, "Judge Gans should be ignored. We will not abide by his ruling." This government of Ernie Eves is bringing in a law today, Bill 58. They want to ram it through without debate because this law is basically an attempt to negate the Ontario Superior Court.

Can you imagine if Mr and Mrs Joe Citizen, living in Welland or Thorold or Wawa or Stratford, scoffed at the Ontario Superior Court? What could the ordinary citizen do if they were found guilty of an offence by the Ontario Superior Court? Well they certainly couldn't come to this Legislature and write a law, ram it through and disregard the Ontario Superior Court decision.

They want to ram this through, because they don't want the public to know this government is disobeying the law. They want to make their own laws without the public knowing about it, and the public is going to be shortchanged. The public is going to be abused even more because in this legislation there is no consumer protection. The same kind of scandalous door-to-door behaviour that this government made legal with the gas marketers and the electricity rip-off artists is going to continue.

1720

One thing in particular, as I mentioned before: their own company, run by Eleanor Clitheroe and her yachts, held a door-to-door sales campaign where they signed up 198,000 Ontarians to electricity contracts. They went to the doors of seniors all over this province and said, "Sign with Onsource," which is the Ontario company. "We're Ontario Hydro. You can trust us. We've been in business

for 100 years. Sign on the dotted line." They signed up 198,000 people to electricity contracts. They even signed up a couple of hundred thousand to telephone contracts and gas contracts. Up to almost 400,000 Ontarians were signed by their company, Ms Clitheroe's company, on the premise that they were signing with Ontario Hydro, a trustworthy company.

Do you know what this government allowed Ms Clitheroe and Mr Osborne to do? They allowed them to sell these contracts, flip them, to a company in Alberta, a company that nobody had ever heard of in Ontario. They basically used the goodwill of over 395,000 Ontarians to line the pockets of Ms Clitheroe and of this company in Alberta that nobody has ever heard of and no one in this government even raised a hackle. In fact, the Minister of Energy said it was OK because it was in the fine print of one of these phony contracts. Bill 58 still allows for that fine print, which is going to mean that more and more seniors are going to be subjected to the door-to-door marketers that this government has unleashed across this province like a swarm of locusts. This will continue. They will continue to rip off seniors and people who can't cope with English as a first language. This does nothing to stop that.

I was just fascinated by the member for Niagara Falls coming to the defence of Bob Rae, saying all that stuff—all the attacks they made on Bob Rae here for seven years. For seven years we heard nothing but Bob Rae bashing. Now that they have plucked Bob Rae back from Bay Street to save them from the mess of Hydro One, they are saying that Bob Rae is great. The member for Niagara Falls is now saying that Bob Rae has seen the light, that he's now reformed, that he's now going to be the saviour of Hydro. That's what they're saying. For seven years with Mike Harris, Bob Rae is no good. Now Ernie Eves and Bart Maves, the member for Niagara Falls, are coming to the defence of Bob Rae. Incredible. Then, as I said, Bob Rae's partner will be none other than the former Treasurer of the province of Ontario under the New Democratic regime. Floyd Laughren is now running the Ontario Energy Board, which is supposed to protect millions of Ontario consumers with four inspectors. That's all the money they've given the Ontario Energy Board: to hire four inspectors to protect millions of households from the government's door-to-door marketers that it permits to go and rip off seniors, rip off anybody who walks for greed.

In fact this government, by being so negligent, is giving door-to-door salespeople a bad name. Usually door-to-door people are not bad people, but by telling them—it was the Electricity Act in 1998 and it's this Bill 58. What they've said is, "You can do anything you want door to door. Just sign them up. Make your millions." I remember when this first broke, these door-to-door marketers of the government were getting busloads of students and dropping them off in Bramalea at 8 o'clock in the morning, saying, "We'll pick you up at supper-time." These poor kids were going door to door on a commission basis. They didn't know what they were

selling. They were basically left abandoned to try and hustle this stuff door to door.

This government is obviously in deep trouble. We've never seen such a series of incompetence, negligence. They claimed for three years they didn't know Ron Osborne and Eleanor Clitheroe were getting these yachts and these limos. They didn't know that. They didn't know these people were getting paid \$2.3 million. They said, "It wasn't me; it was the other minister." They didn't see anything. Now they say, "Trust us. We are going to do much better. Ram through this bill and we will do much better."

As we well know, this is the same Minister of Finance, Mr Ernie Eves, who's now Premier, who gave away Highway 407 for \$7 billion under market value. He is now telling us, "Trust us with the sale of Hydro One." Whom are they going to sell Hydro to? I don't know, but you can rest assured that it will be some Spanish consortium like the one that owns 407 and it will be their Tory hangers-on who will be there on the sidelines, the Clitheroes and the Osbornes. They'll be there sucking back the millions at the expense of those poor seniors, who, when they see those hydro and gas bills, can hardly stop from, really, throwing up, they are so upset. They know that this government has let them down. They know that this government only cares about the Osbornes of this world, the Clitheroes of this world and doesn't care about people who are trying to pay their bills, who have been good taxpayers, good citizens. All they want is basic hydro. All they want is gas to heat their homes. They don't want to pay for yachts and \$2.3-million salaries for Osborne and Clitheroe.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Kormos: Marilyn Churley, the member from Toronto-Danforth, is going to be speaking to this bill shortly from an environmental perspective.

I'm going to give you a phone number, Speaker. It's a very important phone number. I want you to write this down, please. This phone number is 416-325-6639. Speaker, I want you and other people who are concerned about the way the government's ramming this bill through to start calling that phone number.

Ms Churley: What is it again?

Mr Kormos: That's the government caucus office: 416-325-6639. As I say, the number is 416-325-6639. I want you to share this number with your neighbours, I want you to share this number with your children—416-325-6639. I want that phone to be jammed Monday morning. I want the government caucus office to be in disarray because none of the caucus members will be able to phone in; all they'll hear are busy signals because folks are calling in. That's 416-325-6639.

Now, if you want to fax baby pictures, wedding photos, holiday brochures: 416-325-6300, the government caucus office. Fax the government caucus office. Jam up that fax machine. Make it go through ink cartridges like there is no tomorrow. Fax 416-325-6300. Gum things up, because let me tell you, this government

is gumming things up for you, folks. It's about time we gummed things up for them.

The Acting Speaker: This is infomercial time and now is the opportunity for the member for Scarborough Centre. Comments and questions.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Speaker, I really did not heckle the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, because so much of what he said left me absolutely speechless. This individual, I recall, sat on Metro council, he was a Metro councillor, and he cannot sit in his chair today and tell me he did not participate in debate about the disposal of Metropolitan Toronto assets.

What this judge's decision says is, we cannot dispose of our own public assets. He absolutely freezes our opportunity to look after our own assets. There's nothing in this bill—as Mr Colle well knows even though he obviously has not read the bill, because it is enabling legislation, OK—absolutely nothing that decides the fate of Ontario Hydro. This bill simply reinforces the fact and the historical reality, which you must know if you sat on Metro council, that anything owned by the Ontario government was fair game for disposal, enhancement, alteration—whatever the province and it's elected members in their infinite wisdom decided to do with that asset was fair game. You should understand that, Mr Colle. I certainly do.

1730

Mr Phillips: I just want to say that the member for Eglinton-Lawrence makes for the public the right case on this Hydro One board.

The charge I make is that the government knew every step of the way everything the Hydro One board was doing. Ernie Eves was the Deputy Premier. He was the big guy in charge of the finances and ran everything. He knew that entire board. They were hand-picked by the government. They were given directions on what they should be doing and they agreed to carry it out.

The Minister of Energy, Mr Wilson, met with them frequently. They informed them—these are professional board people—every step of the way. The government only blew the whistle on this salary—this was raised on May 15, 2002, in the Legislature. When we raised it here in the Legislature, neither Mr Eves nor Mr Stockwell said one thing. We raised the \$6-million severance. Check the Hansard. Neither Mr Eves nor Mr Stockwell condemned it or said one single thing. It was only in the days later when the firestorm blew that the government tried to distance itself from the decisions that the province of Ontario have a right to hold them 100% responsible for.

Mr Wilson said he saw this board getting out of control two years ago. I challenge the government again: prove that. Give us one piece of evidence. When Mr Wilson saw the board getting out of control with these abhorrent salaries, as he called them, what did he do on behalf of the people of Ontario? Table a letter that you sent to the board? Table minutes that you sent to the board? The board got nothing from this government until last week. If that is not the case, I challenge the government to refute it.

Ms Churley: I want to say to the government that when the government members stand up and tell us they are putting forward this bill because they were told by the court they don't have the right to sell public assets so they're going to court now, appealing it and bringing in legislation—which, by the way, is retroactive in some cases—so they can sell one of the most valuable assets that belongs to the people of Ontario, they have not been given the authority to do that.

Furthermore, it is very clear that the people of Ontario are saying no to the sell-off of Hydro One and indeed Ontario Hydro Generation. Just because this asset belongs to the government of Ontario—let me distinguish for you what that means. You and I are here to represent the people of Ontario, and they are telling this government very clearly that they own this asset. They don't want this bill before the Legislature. They want them to listen to the court decision and make it very clear they are going to listen to the people and not even contemplate selling it off. They want the Premier to stand up and say, "We are taking it off the table. We are not going to sell it." Instead, they bring forward a piece of legislation that is allowing them to take this very valuable asset, which is in good public hands, which is making a profit and servicing our energy needs, and they want to sell it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes to respond.

Mr Colle: I appreciate the final opportunity to sum up. I just want to thank the member from Scarborough Centre for saying that I made her breathless with my speech. I know she has always been a good colleague in Metro and I appreciate those kind remarks. I want to tell her that I was trying to recall what assets we were trying to get rid of at Metro. The only asset they wanted to get rid of at that time was our electric trolleys, but I was in favour of trying to keep them. It was Mr Leach, your former colleague, who wanted to sell those assets and I didn't want him to do it.

I just want to say that Bill 58 is basically—I call it the We Are Above the Law Act. This government, by passing Bill 58, which it is ramming through by 6 o'clock tonight, is disregarding the decision of the Ontario Superior Court, which was clear and explicit. It said it was illegal for this government to proceed with the sale. So Bill 58 is basically saying, "We are above the law. The government of Ontario, doesn't have to obey the Superior Court. We are going to make our own law." That's why, in conscience, there is no way anybody in this Legislature can support Bill 58.

I agree that we have to get people in Ontario to call in, phone in to the Premier's office—never mind the caucus office—at 416-325-1941, and tell the Premier of this province that he is not above the law; to obey the law and not to sell off Hydro One and not to make the same mistake he did when he sold off the 407 for \$7 billion under market price. Again, the Premier's number, to say no to the sale, is 416-325-1941. Call Ernie and tell him no.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Churley: I have 10 minutes, because under this government's anti-democratic rules we have now reverted from 20 minutes to 10 minutes. Because of the time allocation motion put forth today, this is going to be my only opportunity to speak on this bill, and I can guarantee you I have a lot to say about this bill.

Let me start by congratulating CEP and CUPE for putting up the resources and having the guts to take this government on and defeat them in court. We would not even be here debating this bill at this time if it weren't for CEP and CUPE going to court, defeating the government and forcing them to at least delay their privatization of Hydro One, forcing them to at least talk to the people and rethink what they're doing. But then they come forward with a bill that opens the door to allow them to privatize Hydro One, when they know that the people of Ontario don't want them to do that.

The Tories did not even commission a single study—not one study did they do. They didn't consult and they tried to proceed without debate in this House. All of a sudden, out of the blue—they had announced that they were going to privatize the generation side. We were fighting that vigorously but it was out there at least. This came out of the blue, and we all know why: because the government brought forward a bill that said they can't have a deficit. They're in some economic trouble. They are giving corporations big tax cuts again and this is an opportunity to make a fast buck.

If you read their bill carefully, even though government members and the minister and the Premier stand up and say, "Every cent that is made off the sale will go into paying down the debt on Hydro," that indeed is not the case. There are provisions in there whereby the government can remove billions of that money from the sale, whatever it is, to put into the general revenue.

1740

I want to come back to CUPE and CEP for at least allowing us the opportunity to have this discussion and this debate. There was a story in the Toronto Star that said it was the action that these two unions mounted that ignited the public in opposition. The story I read did acknowledge that Howard Hampton has been leading the fight, leading the charge, on opposing the privatization of both Hydro One and generation. But the story said that his campaign failed to ignite.

I want to say here in this House that that is not the case. In fact André Foucault, the president of CEP, sent me a copy of a letter he wrote in response to that story to the Star. It did not get published, but I want to say to people clearly what the president of CEP said in that letter. He said that if it weren't for Howard Hampton's spirited and inspirational campaign, CEP and CUPE probably would not have gone to court. They saw Howard Hampton out there day after day, criss-crossing the province in the Public Power bus, going to community after community, talking directly to the people about the implications of the privatization of both Hydro One and the generation of power. Community after community, hundreds and hundreds of people, came out and

signed petitions. In fact, polls show—it has probably increased now, but up to 70% at that time were opposed. This letter did not get printed, but he stated that they were inspired by the work of Mr Hampton and his campaign to proceed and take a chance, using up a lot of their resources to go to court.

I was in the courtroom when the judge was reading his decision, and indeed it was a great victory, not only for those unions but for all of those who are in opposition to this odious plan to sell off one of our incredible public assets.

One of the things about this bill that we can claim as a victory, and it is a victory, is the section that talks about protecting the hydro transmission lines. I have here two news stories, one dated Sunday, March 10, and another dated April 3.

“Three left-wing politicians are urging Tory leadership candidates to prevent more than 4,000 hectares of provincial hydro corridor lands from falling into private hands.

“Toronto city Councillor Jack Layton also said he plans to ask council for a two-year freeze on any sale....

“Layton, NDP leader Howard Hampton and Toronto-Danforth New Democrat MPP Marilyn Churley announced the initiatives yesterday at the GO Transit terminal.” That was when we first alerted the public to what was in the prospectus.

Then again on April 3, “The prospectus being used to privatize Hydro One puts public transit at risk, NDP deputy leader Marilyn Churley said today.” Again on April 3, I along with others in my caucus alerted the public and the government to the fact that under the prospectus they put out, this valuable land could be sold off. We alerted the government to this, and it is one area in this bill where the government did listen. It never should have been included in the first place, and they had to be urged and pushed to make that provision.

The other thing I want to talk about is the energy consumers’ bill of rights. The government says they can’t make it retroactive to protect up to one million customers who signed with energy marketers prior to the enactment of this bill—up to one million people, many of them vulnerable people and seniors who have been ripped off, and there is nothing in this bill to help them. It’s over for them. But the really odious thing about that is that the government says they can’t do it. At the same time, this is the same government that is plugging a loophole that would have rendered the privatization of utilities illegal. They are making that amendment retroactive to 1998. When it suits their own purposes, they’ve made clauses in this bill before us retroactive to 1998. Yet they would not put in the energy consumers’ bill of rights, a retroactive clause to protect vulnerable people, many on fixed incomes who will not be able to afford these higher rates, because it didn’t suit their interests. When it suits their interests, it’s retroactive; when it doesn’t, it’s not in there.

Finally, in the couple of minutes I have left, I want to speak directly to some of the claims the government is

making about the environment and the privatization of Hydro. I have some press releases and statements by environment groups here.

The Toronto Environmental Alliance is saying directly to the government—and they keep ignoring this—that “The Ontario government’s plan for electricity privatization and deregulation in light of the experience with electricity restructuring in the United States and Europe”—they find by looking at this government’s plan that it provides incentives to produce and sell more power from the province’s highly polluting coal-fired plants and nuclear generating stations; that it will increase the more than 1,900 premature deaths due to air pollution in the province from smog; that it creates barriers to introducing green power from renewable sources like wind and solar power. Stop making those claims that if you privatize Hydro it’s actually going to bring the ability to bring these green producers on side. In fact, it’s the opposite. Your plan is not structured to do that. It creates markets that are easily manipulated by large private power companies to increase profits and squeeze out the small green power providers. It makes the electrical sector subject to the rules of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which put profits over environmental protection and will limit what future Ontario governments are able to do to promote conservation and green power. That’s the real story behind this.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Hastings: Once again we have to reiterate some very fundamental premises about this bill and about the whole Hydro debate, in the broadest context. What we usually have emanating from our friends across the way, the old socialists, is that you should pretty well keep everything the way it is, such as that a monopoly is one of the best ways of providing power, that you don’t need to make any change.

Even the auditor’s report, in its criticism of some of the assumptions in here, certainly points out that what is so good, and I referred to this earlier, with respect to the Bruce A nuclear reactor units that right now are mothballed—they’re not producing a penny. According to the approach by the members opposite, that’s probably a pretty good thing. To reopen them, Ontario Power Generation noted it would take at least \$600 million. That’s what they told the auditor. But according to the socialists across the way, keep them closed, expand the stranded debt, establish the status quo.

It’s very interesting. I had an experience recently with Canada Post. They’re in the business, as a monopoly, of providing the mail. I sent an item away registered mail. You think, “Oh, it’ll get there.” Guess what? It didn’t get there. Guess how long it took to figure out where the thing went? It’s only a little item, it’s not that important, but it’s illustrative of the attitude of monopolies. It took about 90 days to trace it. Guess how they do it? By manual tracing. They don’t even have a bar code to deal with it. That’s why we need—

The Acting Speaker: The member’s time has expired. Comments and questions?

1750

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is a pleasure to comment on the remarks of the member for Toronto-Danforth. The main point here, and it was partly made, I think, is that Bill 58 is really the Band-Aid bill. The government got its hand in the socket. There's no other way to put it. They got a big shock from the courts. This is a deal they cooked up in the Albany Club with the outgoing Premier. He was going to sell off Hydro One, sell off what the 1998 report that begat the electricity bill said you cannot sell off without having self-dealing and manipulation of price. It said that. They knew that opposite.

The people of Ontario are watching, shaking their heads, wondering, "Is it just everybody who is incompetent over there?" Or are they trying to say that a few people, the new energy minister or the new Premier, didn't know things when they should know them?

This is a complete mess, and every single word in this bill is about the things this government wasn't prepared to do in the first place: the lack of consumer protection, the way they were going to get rid of the hydro corridors, the way they weren't going to control what happened in terms of the running of Hydro One and so on. But it all adds up to a lack of courage on the part of the backbench over there. They aren't prepared, even after being caught at it—even after having condoned this deal at the Albany Club, they still won't sit down on their cabinet, on their Premier and say, "You've got to make a decision here. You've got to make it in this House."

To have the member from Scarborough say that we depend on the wisdom of the members of this House absolutely undermines the credibility of this government caucus, because they went out of here in December without any reference to this House whatsoever, and they were going to sell of the whole shebang, the hydro corridors, the hefty pensions and so on. They knew that somewhere in the bowels of the Albany Club all this was happening and now what we have is just the cover-up, the mess. They have their hands stuck in the socket and, quite frankly, it looks very good on the government.

Mr Maves: I want to commend the member for Toronto-Danforth. Of all the opposition people who have spoken to the bill today, she's the first one who actually said something about the bill, so I commend her for that. But I have to tell you that every other member, including the member who just sat down and including Mr Colle for Eglinton-Lawrence, who feign all this great concern about the end of debate, has still failed to talk about the bill.

The member for Eglinton-Lawrence got up and talked about rip-offs and basically humiliated and condemned every person who has every gone door-to-door to sell anything. He did talk about a problem. There are people who rip people off and they do it on door-to-door sales.

But in the bill is the energy consumers' bill of rights. The bill substantially wants to fix, and help consumers with, the problem of predatory and unscrupulous door-to-

door salespeople. They're not all like that, but this specifically aims to deal with that.

I guess the Liberals are opposed to dealing with that because they're opposed to the bill going forward. It's remarkable. I can't get over how they continue to say they're all upset about closure of debate, when it's 5 minutes to 6 and none of them has even mentioned the bill. They obviously have nothing to say about the bill and there's obviously no sense in continuing to go on and on with debate.

It's remarkable that they are opposed to the consumer protection that's in the bill. It is absolutely remarkable. Of course, it's also absolutely remarkable that they complain about some of the Hydro One contracts but are holding up the government from doing something about it.

Mr Phillips:—one is an embarrassment to the people of Ontario. We were told the government was heading in one direction. They didn't even get the legislation right. And now we find that the hand-picked board by the government, the hand-picked board of directors, hand-picked by the government when Mr Eves was the Deputy Premier, that gave the board direction, that knew every step of the way what was happening, that knew every step of the way about these outrageous payments to the chief executive officer, knew all about that—the board has told us they kept the government informed every step of the way. Now we find that the government is trying to say they knew nothing. Mr Wilson contradicts that. Mr Wilson, the Minister of Energy, 18 months ago said that the board was proposing these salaries that he found abhorrent, and every time he raised it, it got worse.

Well, I say to the people of Ontario, what happened? Why didn't Mr Wilson, who was supposed to be there representing the taxpayers, send a letter, meet with them? He said he met with them frequently. Where's the evidence of the steps the government took? So far we have only one piece of communication, dated last week. The only reason the government acted was because they got caught. The board, every step of the way, did what they thought, and then the government got caught. Nothing happened until last week—the only correspondence we've seen at all from the government. There's where the blame lay. The Hydro charade.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Toronto-Danforth has two minutes to respond.

Ms Churley: I would say to the member for Niagara Falls that I had a lot more things to say about this bill, but my time is up and I won't have another opportunity.

Let me tell you one of these other things I wanted to talk about in more detail, and that is this: section 50.3 provides for all proceeds to go to the debt "less any amount that the Minister of Finance considers advisable in connection with the acquisition of such securities, debt obligations or interest, including the amount of the purchase price, any obligations assumed and any other costs incurred by her Majesty in right of Ontario." As well, "costs incurred ... in disposing of the securities" etc—those kinds of things would also be included.

It's possible, when you start reading these caveats in here, that it leaves the Minister of Finance with considerable discretion to grab a large proportion of this money, raised through the sale or any other arrangement such as the creation of a non-profit. The government has cited the \$4-billion government equity in Hydro One as the amount that would be deducted and put into general revenues. But this section appears to allow them to take even more than that out.

So when the government comes and talks its rhetoric about doing this and every red cent going into paying down the debt, it is disingenuous at best. I would say to

all members in the House that if it were the NDP in power or the Liberals in power and there was such a monumental scandal going on in terms of the salaries and what the government knew and didn't act on the behaviour now, the Tories would be over here screaming for heads to roll and cabinet resignations. I believe that would be in order for this government.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until a quarter to 7, or 6:45 if you're on a digital.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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