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JOHN YAKABUSKI, M.P.P. - RENFREW-NIPISSING-PEMBROKE

Legislative Debate

March 2, 2009

Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009 Bill 150

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 26, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 150, An Act to enact the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to build a green economy, to repeal the Energy Conservation Leadership Act, 2006 and the Energy Efficiency Act and to amend other statutes / Projet de loi 150, Loi édictant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et visant à développer une économie verte, abrogeant la Loi de 2006 sur le leadership en matière de conservation de l'énergie et la Loi sur le rendement énergétique et modifiant d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Linda Jeffrey): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to join this debate, late though it is. We deferred our lead last week because we were trying to get some further information on this bill, which the minister described when he was promoting it as being a bill of magnificent and gargantuan proportions that was maybe the biggest thing to hit Ontario since the ice storm of 1998.

I'm not sure just what he was referring to, because the bill was introduced last Monday. We had never seen the bill prior to that. Nobody sees the bill, as you know, until it's introduced in the House and tabled.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Caucus certainly doesn't.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It certainly doesn't. We had no opportunity to caucus, nor did the members of the third party.

So we asked for a little bit more time and wondered what would be the need and the rush to get this bill through post-haste without proper debate of any real significance and of any real substance. We referred, as a matter of fact, to the government's own precedent.

You have to understand, Mr. Speaker, as I know you do, that this bill amends or repeals 15 other acts currently on the books in the province of Ontario. This would be described by some as an omnibus bill that requires extensive and total and complete debate before proceeding. So what we did is, we asked for the government to follow its own example. I know it's hard sometimes for us to say to the government, "Please follow the example of the previous government or a government that sat in another Parliament," and we

understand the reluctance of them to do that. But all we asked, Mr. Speaker, was for them to follow their own example and do what then-Energy Minister Dwight Duncan did when he introduced Bill 100, and I know you recall that bill because I believe you spoke on it.

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What Minister Duncan did at the time was he recognized that the bill, which again amended a bunch of acts and covered a whole lot of bases in the electricity sector- he took the step of allowing that bill to go to committee prior to second reading, after first reading. He felt, and rightfully so, that the bill needed to be digested and analyzed and properly debated throughout the province- and I participated in many of those committee hearings as well- so that all of the relevant people, stakeholders and citizens in the province of Ontario who had some issues with the bill or maybe just believed that there was a way they could improve the bill on behalf of the rest of the people of Ontario, had an opportunity to speak. Sadly, given the energy and infrastructure minister- but for the purpose of this bill we will just call him the energy minister or we may call him the minister of everything because he apparently wants to take over the responsibilities of all ministers in this House and answer all questions, even when they're not directed to him. Sadly, given the opportunity to do the right thing, did he choose to do the right thing? No. He had the opportunity. We gave it to him. We were being very magnanimous about the whole issue. We want to get to the bottom of things. We want to do what is best for the people all across the province of Ontario. We gave him that opportunity and he said no.

You know I'm not one to quote other people out of context or something like that, but what he was really saying was, "We need this bill and we need it passed now because we don't want people across the province of Ontario to take a good, hard, long look at this piece of legislation. We want to sneak it in by cover of darkness, if possible, but we realize we have to do some debating in this House. We want to sneak it through and hope that by the time the people realize it, it'll be passed."

We, as Her Majesty's loyal opposition, cannot allow that to happen without exacting at least the minimum amount of debate that we can get this government to participate in. So that's what we're doing, that's why we're having this debate now. We had hoped to go to committee first- and I'll touch on committee a little later in my address- but I think that, at the very least, we're here where we are now and we can't change that even though we disagree emphatically with the actions of the government. But at the very least, as this progresses and as we take this bill through this House- and we have no doubt, we're not delusional here. We know that this bill is going to pass because Premier McGuinty's office will have made sure that every member of the government side knows that they're either voting for this bill or they're not well that day. They're not going to be allowing people to vote against this bill, we know that. So given the fact that the numbers are on their side and not on our side, we know this bill is going to pass, and so be it. So that gives us an opportunity then to take this bill out across the province for other people to look at it.

The minister kind of chided us or chastised us for even expecting that we would get further information on the bill before bringing it before this House; he kind of belittled our request. Subsequent to that, it appears that the minister was having trouble understanding the bill himself. In questions from reporters, when asked about the warrantless entry, he couldn't seem to understand it. Earlier today, in referencing a question, the minister talked about trying to compare the warrantless entry to a situation that existed in a bill under the previous government in 2002, which was one that allowed investigators to go in to protect consumers where there was nefarious actions on the part of generators or billers-totally unrelated to what we were talking about today. The warrantless entry into people's businesses would be to see if they've done an energy audit: to rifle through their personal possessions, to uproot drawers and go through untold documents to see if they can find an energy audit. This will not do a single thing to improve or reduce greenhouse gases or make it greener. It's just an energy audit.

The bill doesn't compel anybody to do anything in their home. It's just that they have to pay hundreds of dollars to have an energy audit done. Much of it could be done by yourself. You can walk into a house if you're looking to buy it. You can read the CMHC stamps in the windows. It will tell you what year those windows were produced. You'll know how old the windows are. You'll have a pretty good idea of whether they need replacing-and that's if they're a double-sealed window. If they're older, if they're a single-pane window, we know that they're not energy-efficient, and you don't need an audit to tell you that. You can also determine the date and the relative condition of a furnace much easier than having an energy audit. If it's old and tired, it's probably a good question to be asking for more details on the furnace as you negotiate that real estate transaction. Those provisions are there today. You can ask those kinds of questions in any kind of real estate transaction. In fact, you could ask for an energy audit to be done. It doesn't have to be mandatory.

A good question is where we're going to get the people to do these mandatory audits, or maybe that's what the minister is talking about when he talks about the 50,000 jobs that he believes-excuse me. Last week it was 50,000 jobs will be created; later in the week, it has the potential to create 50,000 jobs. Now that's pretty broad: "potential." The Toronto Maple Leafs have the potential to win the Stanley Cup this year. Does anybody believe that they're going to win it? No. They have the potential. They can still make the playoffs and they can still win the cup. There's nothing to preclude them from winning the Stanley Cup, other than the fact that, as we know, it ain't gonna happen, just as we know that he's not going to create those 50,000 jobs. I'm a Leafs fan, but I'm realistic enough to know that it's not going to happen.

Then, on Focus Ontario on Saturday night, the energy minister was asked by Sean Mallen of Global TV about those 50,000 jobs and how he's going to create them. I want to quote. Sean Mallen said, "Okay, but my question that I was leading up to was 50,000 jobs. How do you know it's going to create 50,000 jobs? Where will the jobs be?" The minister, who only a week earlier was saying, "Absolutely guaranteed, nothing to worry about"-and that's just the start-what did he say? "Well, how does one ever know these things?" That's

kind of confusing because, you see, on one hand the minister was absolutely certain and that's what he talked about in this act: "We're going to give you certainty."

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Like coal-fired generation-

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah. So when you say, "How does one know these things? How does one ever know these things?" I don't think that's certainty. In fact, the minister is starting to doubt his own blather.

The minister talked about-but he got a dressing-down on this one, I think. I think the Premier called him into the office and he said, "George, I know you want to be the minister of everything. You're trying to display that. You probably even want to be Premier. But as long as I, Dalton McGuinty, am Premier, you ain't going to be making those kinds of statements."

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You see, the minister said last week in his press conference, "This would mean"-and listen carefully to this, Mr. Speaker, because you don't want to miss it. You'll be able to tell those people back home what your minister said. He said-

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: The member is welcome to debate the bill but he is clearly in violation of standing order 23(i), "Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member," which is exactly what he's doing-

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): I think the member is in order, but please try to stay on track. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. Please advise the minister of points of order to read that book before he stands up. Anyway, you see, he understands that I am somewhat hypothesizing because I wasn't actually there. But we can read between the lines; I think we're allowed to do that.

The minister was taken to task in the Premier's office. The Premier said, "Don't you be making those statements there, George. It doesn't look good." So here's the minister, he's going out there saying, "This will lead to a 1% increase per year in your hydro bill." It's laughable, absolutely laughable.

So the Premier thought, "We can't have George going around saying these things, because people are starting to say, 'Wow! Come on! Jeez, we knew we couldn't believe them when they said they were going to close the coal-fired power plants, but maybe we thought they'd actually learned the lesson and they were going to try to stick to the facts.'"

It's not rocket science. You're going to spend-and this is the minister himself-billions and billions and billions. If Carl Sagan was still around, you'd think it was him talking. The minister's going to spend all of this money. And you know what, folks? "It ain't gonna

cost you a dime." Does anybody really believe that? We all know that there is no free ride. You don't get anything for nothing in this world.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Someone's got to pay.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But somebody's got to pay. When you decide that you're going to take an energy system, and try to bring in a whole lot of expensive generation to replace cheaper generation, the price must go up. He alluded to that when Mr. Sean Mallen on Focus Ontario asked him about the price, because of the fact that in Germany-

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: -the price is 24 cents-thank you very much-24 cents a kilowatt hour; in Denmark it's over 35. Mr. Mallen asked him about that and he said, "Well, you've got to remember, we're not going to have that amount of renewable power. They've got way more than we do." So he's admitting renewable power is going to be expensive, but he's also saying that you really aren't going to bring that much online.

I don't know what he considers a high enough percentage, but in Germany, renewable wind produces less than 8% of their power. Even though it has almost 30% of the installed capacity, it produces only 8% of the power. This is the thing that the government doesn't want to talk about. Everybody in this House is in favour of a cleaner, greener environment. No party is greener than the Progressive Conservatives.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You will recall the former government and the Lands for Life act. You will recall the former government's Smart Growth, to curb the broadening and the growth of cities all over this province. To this day, there is only one minister-and that was Elizabeth Witmer, when she was the Minister of the Environment-who actually ordered the closure of a coal-fired generating station in this province. These folks have not ordered anything. Only one minister did it, and that was Liz Witmer. Now, the Liberals were there for the photo op when the stacks came down. They were all lined up making sure they had their picture taken, but it was Liz Witmer who ordered that station shut down and closed. So let's not forget that there is no party that recognizes the need for protecting the environment more than the Progressive Conservatives. However, we won't just tell you a story. We won't try to snow you or even, I dare say, possibly mislead people. We won't do that. We're going to tell them the facts, and we're going to allow people to make decisions based on the facts.

Let's go back a little bit in time, because I'm trying to frame this in a way that people understand. I know you understand, Speaker, and I don't think you're a part of it. I think that a big part of you would really like to stay away from it, but I know you're in a party that is pretty well controlled by one office. But I think there's hope.

Anyway, let's go back to 2003 and the iron-clad Liberal promise to close coal-fired generation stations in the province of Ontario by 2007. The Premier claimed that he based that promise on expert advice from people in the energy field who could absolutely ascertain that it was doable. I asked then-Energy Minister Dwight Duncan in estimates two years ago, "Will you provide the names of those said experts that the Premier alludes to? Provide those names to the House." I asked it in estimates, and the minister said to me, "Absolutely." Well, just like that elusive Stanley Cup, I'm still waiting.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, the guy's name was Kinsella.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It could have been Warren Kinsella, but he's too busy trying-I understand he wants to be a food critic now, and go around insulting hard-working people in the Chinese community. But that's Warren Kinsella. What can we do about him? I'll get my name on his blog again this week, maybe.

Let's get back to the issue: the feed-in tariff the minister talks about. Let's get back to those 50,000 jobs. They're bouncing around. They really don't know where they're going to create the jobs. They don't even know if they're creatable, and they certainly cannot state that those jobs are permanent or sustainable. You have to understand that if some of those jobs are going into the erection of wind towers, once the towers are up, the jobs are done. They're wishing and hoping that they can create 50,000 jobs. But as Randall Denley, an excellent columnist for the Ottawa Citizen, said in his column, and I'll paraphrase, you might think you want to create 50,000 jobs, but wake up; you lost 71,000 jobs just last month in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. How do you balance that?

They're going to create 50,000 jobs, maybe-that's what they claim-but I don't think there are too many people left in the province of Ontario who believe too much of what comes out of the Premier's office or from the minister of everything. He wants his name changed from George Smitherman to C.D. Howe, because he wants to be the boss of everything.

Anyway, I don't think there are people out there who believe-

Mr. Peter Kormos: What about Boss Hogg?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Boss Hogg? Well, I don't know about that. That's Dukes of Hazzard. That's an American icon. We're sticking to Canadian icons, Peter.

I don't think there are people who believe much that's coming out of that office these days, certainly not when it comes to their being straightforward. I don't want to get ruled out of order here; I don't want the minister of points of order to stand up. I want to make sure I don't say anything that's unparliamentary, but people just don't believe them. If somebody never believes anything you say, you know what they think you are? That's kind of what I'm trying to say.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That you're lying with dogs.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, exactly.

So, Randall Denley just wonders where these guys are coming from with not only their job projections, but the fact that they're throwing this whole thing out as a smokescreen, a distraction, a diversion from their sorry economic record. I'll quote the first line of his piece:

"When a politician is in deep trouble, he typically seeks to create a distraction. Trouble doesn't get much worse than the type that Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty is facing. Desperate to change the channel from continuing job losses and a ballooning provincial deficit, McGuinty this week championed the Green Energy Act."

He doesn't want people talking about the economy. He doesn't want people talking about job losses in Ontario, and every day, the news gets worse. Where's Dalton McGuinty?

I tell you what he doesn't appear to be doing: doing something. He doesn't seem to be doing something about the economy, because, while every other jurisdiction that recognized the state of the economy not only here but elsewhere-and I concede that; I want to be fair-moved post-haste to bring in an economic stimulus package and a budget to ensure-you know, you don't send the carpenter to fix the electrical panel. When the job requires new expertise, you send in a new expert, and you certainly have to have a different tool box.

What was passed in the budget of last year is irrelevant. This party and John Tory and this party have been calling for a new budget from this provincial government for weeks and months, and they sit back and somehow hope that Stephen Harper does their work for them. Well, Stephen Harper's tired of bailing them out. It's time that you guys took the little pacifier out of your mouths and stood up and took your first steps and got on with the job yourselves. It's time to grow up. You can't sit back there and wait for Stephen Harper and the federal government to do all the work for you. That's got to stop. People in Ontario expect better.

They want to talk about the minister talking about some of the plans. There are some things in here that, I have to tell you, I think have some merit. I like much of the biomass aspect of it because it's not just about creating energy, but two of our most historically significant and important sectors of our economy and the Canadian way of life, the Ontario way of life, would benefit by that, namely the agricultural sector and the forestry sector. They're two sectors, Mr. Speaker, that you know, because you have certainly agricultural; I don't think you've got much forestry down there, but I could be wrong. But you certainly have agricultural, and you know how important they are and you know how they are struggling.

Those kinds of aspects, I think, because they are two-pronged in their approach, have some merits, but we do need to get the details. We need to put some meat on the bone.

You just can't have the minister going around and sending out his minions and telling them that "our Green Energy Act is the panacea for everything that ails people in the province of Ontario," because we know that that's simply not true.

Let's get down to some more issues-and it is tough to keep these things all organized. We've had so much input, I have to tell you, from across the province from people concerned about this act. I have to believe that the honourable members across the way, and even the minister of points of order, have certainly heard something about this act from people in their constituencies who are opposed to it and are opposed to different aspects of the act.

I want you to go home this weekend to your constituencies and talk to the people out there and ask them, and be straight with them. Don't give them the song-and-dance spin-and that's no pun intended for the wind developers, but don't give them that spin coming out from the Minister of Energy about how everything here is great, because at the end of the day, how much of Ontario's energy are you actually going to make up? We know it's got to be much, much less than 7%, because that's what Germany's getting. He said, "Oh, that's way out of there; it's not even going to be close to that." But we need to know how much people are going to be paying for this.

The Premier talked about his mother. I've never met his mother, but I'm sure she's a wonderful lady. But-

Mr. Peter Kormos: Disappointed.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't know that, but she may have reason to be.

But I will say this: The Premier likes to cite his mother as an example because it paints him as being the wonderful son and the wonderful family man in the all-Canadian sort of family portrayal, but he has to tell his mother all of the facts, too. He's saying, "My mother shouldn't be focusing on the rate of electricity," and now we know it's going up, when you're saying, "My mother shouldn't worry about the rate; she should worry about the bill." He was alluding to the fact that Germans pay a much higher rate for hydro, but their bills aren't higher.

Well, I don't know if any of the people on the other side of the House were born in Germany. My wife was born in Germany, and I know that at least one other member of our caucus was born in Germany. I sent a picture over to the Premier. I drew a little picture for him. I drew this little, wee house and I put underneath it, "German house." Then I built this great, big house and I said, "Woodbridge house" or "Markham house." I said, "That's why you can't compare the household energy bill in Germany with the household energy bill here." When it comes to power consumption in a home, size matters.

You've got to be straight with people. Don't try and snow them. Don't try and hornswaggle them and lead them down a garden path. That's wrong. You can't be doing

that. You've got to be straight with people. So don't compare an energy bill of a house in Germany and an energy bill of a house in Ontario.

They talk about how they want to emulate some of the things that Barack Obama is doing in the United States.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Hope.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Barack Obama-

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: "Yes, we can."

Mr. John Yakabuski: But they only want to pick part of it. Then Minister Smitherman tells them on Global's Focus Ontario, "It's all about getting to be greener and cleaner, but the Conservatives want to turn those stacks upside down in those coal plants and capture the CO₂."

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: That's not even possible.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Huron-Bruce says that's impossible. Maybe she should talk to Barack Obama, who has made an absolute commitment. As Barack Obama said, "Do you know what? If we can put a man on the moon, we are going to find a way to economically capture carbon." That's what Barack Obama said.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: There's so much anger over there.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, there's so much anger. I can understand why. When you put something out and it bounces back at you with a little bit of a pushback and the people of the province of Ontario are clearly not happy and they ain't buying what you're selling, of course there's anger over there.

Here's a little example of the feed-in tariff and how it has worked in Germany. This is what the province wants to do. They want to use a feed-in tariff, which means they're going to set a price and they're going to pay it. It's not going to be a bid process. They're just going to say, "This is what we'll pay." They're not putting caps on how much they'll accept. They're just saying, "This is what we'll pay," and they'll pay different amounts for different areas based on the suitability or the availability of the source, being the wind.

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I'm going to read this because I don't want anybody to assume or think that it's me talking here, because I certainly don't consider myself that much of an expert to be able to draw these conclusions, but obviously, they're out there. This is from Germany's Solar Cell Promotion: Dark Clouds on the Horizon:

"This article demonstrates that the large feed-in tariffs currently guaranteed for solar electricity in Germany constitute a subsidization regime that, if extended to 2020, threatens to reach a level comparable to that of German hard coal production, a notoriously outstanding example of misguided political intervention.... Similarly disappointing is the net employment balance"-the net employment balance-"which is likely to be negative if one takes into account the opportunity cost of this form of solar photovoltaic support.... We therefore recommend the immediate and drastic reduction of the magnitude of the feed-in tariffs granted for solar-based electricity....

"In 2007, the estimated share of wind power in Germany's electricity production amounted to 7.4%.... In contrast, the electricity produced through ... photovoltaic was ... 0.4%.

"Under this regime, which is based on the Renewable Energy Sources Act ... utilities are obliged to accept the delivery of power from independent producers of renewable electricity into their own grid, thereby paying technology-specific feed-in tariffs far above" their "own production cost.... Ultimately, though, it is the industrial and private consumers that have to bear the cost induced by the" tariff- "through an increase in the price of electricity. Wind power has so far exerted the strongest effect on electricity prices."

The people have a right to know what this is going to mean in electricity prices.

I just want to read something from an article that I got with respect to Germany's plans. They're always talking about how they love the German example, but Germany has gone down the road very far with respect to renewables, and it has created some challenges for them:

"German State Agency Calls for New Power Stations.

"Germany must press on with building up conventional power generation alongside its push for a renewable energy expansion to avoid supply shortfalls and rising prices, German energy agency Dena said on Tuesday"; that's Tuesday, February 10 of this year.

"Demand increases and supply volatility arising from a growing share of erratic production from renewable sources still make new coal and gas-fired power stations necessary, Dena managing director Stephan Kohler said during a trade fair.

"The state agency upheld forecasts Germany could be short of some 12,000 megawatts, or 15 large units, by 2020....

"New build of fossil fuels-based power plants is essential to cover demand peaks, to avoid an efficiency gap due to old plants running longer and to speed innovation....'

"This is also to avoid rising power prices and to ensure Germany's role as a base for industry is safeguarded.'

"Kohler illustrated problems with wind energy, saying 23,000 megawatts were nominally installed, but high pressure fronts in January curbed wind speeds. On one day, only 113 megawatts capacity was active"-113 megawatts out of 23,000.

You can't rely on that, and the Premier has said it himself. I know he sometimes wants to distance himself from things he says because they get him into trouble, because sometimes he doesn't do his research, and I don't think they did the research on this one. But he has said, "Wind is not dependable. We can't depend on wind." Wind is a wonderful source of energy if you take away the negative. There are no fuel costs; there are no emissions; there's no waste. There's no waste product after the production of the energy. But the biggest problem it's got is the one that you cannot get around, that it is totally indispatchable. You can't control it. In an electricity system, you know that you have to be able to ensure that the power that is needed is in the system when it's needed.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Oh, I tried that. Let's not put up any windmills.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll give you a couple of numbers for our own system here. We have 887 megawatts installed in the province of Ontario. I'll just give you some numbers from 2009, on February 28, a Saturday: at 3 o'clock, 42 megawatts; 4 o'clock, 25; 5 o'clock, nine; 6 o'clock, 21. That's what we were getting. Granted-I want to be fair-we've also had some very good days. But it speaks to the issue. We have good days in our nuclear plants every day-every day-because we can depend on them to put out the power we need 24/7, 365 days a year. The fact that we have a good day with wind or several good days-and February is traditionally a pretty good month for wind historically. It's a different problem in the summer months, when the wind doesn't blow as much.

I would encourage all of you to actually go to the IESO's website, and you can get the hourly reports for any generator in the province of Ontario. It will tell you what each unit of each nuclear plant, each coal plant, each hydroelectric facility, each gas plant and each wind facility is putting out at any given hour. I think it's important not just for the people, but also for the members of this House-it's accessible; it's not hard to find-so that you understand yourselves that we have a hybrid system. We support that, but there are limits to how far you can go with the weaker forms of generation, the ones that have such an inherent weakness, which is indispatchability.

We have to ensure that we have control of the power, because power without control is nothing, and Mr. Kormos, I know, would agree with me. Power without control is not good; in fact, it's dangerous.

How much time have I got left? I do want to talk about some of the issues that have been raised to us by members of the public and/or stakeholders. I would request, possibly, to have unanimous consent to go on for an extra hour, if I could, because there are many things in this bill that I'm not going to have time in the time allotted. So I would certainly entertain that as a possibility.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Did you ask him?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I haven't asked him. Can I ask him?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would move for unanimous consent that I have an extra hour to cover all of the points, because I know they're interested. I'm trying to help them. I want them to be able to help their constituents.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): The member is asking for unanimous consent. I hear a no.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I heard the minister of un-unanimous consent over there say no. It's the same minister who knows the standing orders, or thinks he does.

I want to talk about some of the things that people have written to us about. I want to be clear that I am not a scientist. I know that we actually have a scientist in our midst here, and I had the pleasure of sharing the company of the member for Richmond Hill, Mr. Moridi, at the Canadian Nuclear Association conference last week.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He supports nuclear too.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I'll bet he does. He is a nuclear physicist, I believe, by profession, so he is an expert in some of these fields. Perhaps he needs to be talking to the minister of everything, and maybe he can educate him as well. He's a very, very interesting man, and I must say I enjoyed the conversations we had at that conference.

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The point that I'm making is that I'm not an expert; I'm not a doctor and I'm not a scientist, so I'm relating some of these things, but I want you to know that they're out there, Mr. Speaker. I can't speak from a position of authority on some of these issues, but they are coming to us in copious quantities. The e-mails are coming left, right and centre, as they say; high, wide and handsome, as my brother likes to say. He must be talking about himself. But anyway, we're getting these e-mails with regard to a number of concerns, and one of the concerns is the effect that these turbines may or may not have on people's health. We haven't raised this in this House because I'm not sitting here and saying that I can confirm, but I think it is important that the government recognize that those people are out there and they need to be heard. I can't say that these things are happening, but I most certainly cannot say that they're not happening.

I just want to read a letter from-not a constituent of mine, but these things come to me as the energy critic as well:

"So far the Premier and his ministers have simply denied the existence of these problems" related to health problems. "Premier McGuinty, in fact, stated that there are no reliable peer-reviewed studies authenticating these health concerns, yet the government has not

brought forward any such studies that prove his counter-argument. The fact is that enough uncertainty"-and again, this speaks to the minister's word, "certainty": "We want to bring certainty," he said; I'm certain he used that word-"The fact is that enough uncertainty exists that it should compel the government to undertake a fully comprehensive and independent examination of noise, flicker effects, stray voltage and other factors that are known to affect people's health, regardless of their source.

"Wind turbines, once built, are and will be with us for a minimum of 21 years, according to the act. Three or four months of study now could save disastrous results that would be extremely expensive to reverse."

That is from Donna and Larry Close in Flesherton.

They also go on to question the McGuinty government's contention that they'll create 50,000 jobs. I kind of like this one, so I'm going to read it:

"McGuinty and company are pushing forward their green energy and wind turbine agenda on the basis that it will create more than 50,000 jobs over the next three years. First, how this number was calculated remains a mystery, but it is expected that it came from proponents in the industry. In a pre-introduction speech to the Toronto Board of Trade on February 20"-so Mr. Close watches these things closely-"Mr. Smitherman offered up a shopping list of professions that would gain employment from this green energy initiative. There was no offer to justify the conveniently round number or to identify where those jobs might occur, whether they would be part-time or full-time, how permanent they would be or any of the other details that would enable us to audit the success or failure and to hold the government accountable." Pretty reasonable statement. "To his credit"-this is the part I really like, actually-"Mr. Smitherman did not include in his list any butchers, bakers or candlestick makers, but their exclusion did not make his claims any more believable."

So you can see that there's a lot of doubt out there about the government's ability to follow through on what they're promising.

Another part that is very troubling-oh, my goodness, I haven't even got off of page 1. We're going to have to look at that unanimous consent again. Ministerial powers-and this is not a prop, Mr. Speaker; it's part of the legislation. In no less than 20 sections of this bill-listen carefully to this-the minister has broad and sweeping powers to direct. This allows him to have total and sole discretion about what he does.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Would that he would use it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Would that he would use it. Do you think George would use it?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don't think so.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Do you think he likes power?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He likes that.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, man, I'm telling you: 20 sections-unbelievable. As the person who wrote this for me said, " You asked me to provide you with a list of the new powers being centralized in the office of the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, Ontario's new superminister."

You have to take a look at this, folks. For the sake of every citizen in the province of Ontario, for the sake of the rest of you members of the Liberal caucus, do you really want one single member to have this kind of power to direct everything to do with energy in the province of Ontario? I don't think so.

Just leafing through here for a minute-give me a moment, because there's a lot of stuff here. That's essentially why we need more time, of course, Mr. Speaker.

I have e-mails from Ann and Larry Towell, Donna Gage and John McGee asking us to please take a look at what this government is doing in this bill.

One of the things in those ministerial powers-I've got to tell you this, Mr. Speaker, because you'll be concerned. Have you ever been to Algonquin park? I knew you had. Well, I didn't actually know that, but it's sort of like that potential the minister likes to talk about. Under this act, the Minister of Energy could-could-order that turbines be built in Algonquin park. If you're familiar with the park, and I know now that you are, there are some really good ridges in the park that would actually be conducive to significant amounts of wind. Are we serious that we're thinking of building turbines in Algonquin park?

Now, I know the minister is going to say-and other members of the Liberal Party are going to say, because they're told what to say anyway-"Oh, we're never going to do that. We're never going to use that power." Well, if you're never going to use it, why are you putting it in the act in the first place? Why are you opening the door to something as nefarious as building turbines in a provincial park?

I can tell you this: In the community of South Algonquin, which is in the shadow of Algonquin park, the minister has condemned the local council for voting not to allow turbines in their community.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: How could he do that? Condemned? Really?

Mr. John Yakabuski: He wrote a letter to them.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Stripping? A little strip?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't think it was necessary, I say to the member from Trinity-Spadina, but that's the way the minister reacts. As soon as somebody challenges him, he's just gotta show that he's the boss.

That's something we're really concerned about. I want to get to something here, but my filing system is, well, about as good as it is in my office, I guess. This is from Julius Grodski: "I like to express to you the need for a well-evaluated approach to the matters of energy, as the issue is getting a dramatically different outlook elsewhere in the world (e.g. Denmark and Germany) with the recognition that the wind farms have not reduced either the need for fossil-based plants," which I talked about earlier, or "total CO₂ emissions."

In fact, in those countries, even though they've done all of this renewable energy, they have not reduced those emissions as a result of that. Interesting stuff, isn't it? Because this is how the minister purports this act is going to do everything to clean up the air.

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Now, they talk about building all kinds of gas plants. There are some genuine concerns out there. I think everybody out there knows this, but I'm not sure, so I'm going to repeat it if I have said it already. But we do know this: that for every megawatt of non-dispatchable power you have, you must back that up with a megawatt of dispatchable power, something you control. So if you have 4,000 megawatts of wind, you'll have to have 4,000 megawatts of something that is dispatchable, and I don't include nuclear in that, because for the most part it's non-dispatchable. It likes to run with the gas pedal to the floor; that's how it runs best and most efficiently. I know that Mr. Moridi would agree with me there. If you don't trust me, talk to your colleague. He's a good man.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, I hope he uses the two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes.

So the gas situation is thus: that at dawn we have about-and we have enough gas storage for about eight days under normal use. If we had to produce a whole heck of a lot more of our power from gas, would it not stand to reason that we may actually jeopardize the ability of people to heat their homes and water if we got a particularly chilling and cold winter? You've got to be able to balance the supply with the demand, and natural gas requires storage. These are real, genuine issues that you need to think about when you're planning an energy act in the province of Ontario.

I've got a really good e-mail here but I just can't find it. It was from a person who certainly knows the business, but-

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Take your time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I can't waste it, because then I'll lose the-I don't think you'll stop the clock while I look for papers, Mr. Speaker, will you? I didn't think so.

This one e-mail says, "The more I read in this bill and the various commentaries, the more frightened I become about:

"1. Pushing residents and municipal councils completely out of the site selection process for renewable projects...."

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You didn't get a standing ovation; you orchestrated one, I say to the member for Ottawa-O rléans.

"3. The new inspectors to be hired to go anywhere they please to enforce the act, carrying with them the threat of huge fines"- \$10,000 to \$25,000.

"4. Completely changing the economic regulation mandate of the OEB." Absolutely right. Read the bill, folks. It's disturbing; it's scary.

"5. The clear intent to use electricity rates as a means of income redistribution.

"6. Greatly increasing the ability of the minister to issue directives to the OEB, IESO, OPA etc. without cabinet approval.

"7. Forcing energy audits and related bureaucracy onto an already suffering real estate market.

"Smitherman is personally taking complete control of the electricity business and no one is going to get in his way."

That's what that concerned member of the public said, and it's hard to disagree with him that that's what is happening here. It's not exactly a coup attempt, but it's something afoot.

Today the Minister of Culture-who's also the minister responsible for seniors, as you know, Mr. Speaker-was asked a question. This is unbelievable: The minister responsible for seniors was asked a question and she directed it to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; bounced it, punted it. Do you know that before Jim Watson, the minister, could get out of his chair-

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): I would ask the member to get back to the bill that he's speaking on.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Lou Rinaldi): I think you're going a little bit off kilter. I would just ask the member to get back on track.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The minister punted it to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, but before he could get out of his chair, the minister of everything was up, answering the question. It just didn't seem to matter what was being asked. He's the guy who's going to answer it. I know you guys want to have work and you like to be here, and

I really appreciate that, and I think it's important that you come here. But you're probably going to be told at the next cabinet meeting that your presence but not your answers are going to be needed; your presence is welcome, but your answers won't be needed because George will answer everything.

That's what's happening here in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, and the people out there who are the most affected by this-and I'll make this point again because I, believe it or not, am down to my last minute.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's terrible, that someone would cheer when a speaker is going to end. It never happened in this House on our side. We would never do that.

Because there is so much at stake and so many people affected by this-people in my riding who own mills, people in my riding who are on low incomes; they're everywhere in the province-it's time for you people to have a sober second look at this. We realize you're going to pass it. Now, get it to a committee. Let us take this bill throughout the province from far and wide in every kind of community, to rich and poor. Everybody who can have a word on this, let them have a word on it. Let the stakeholders who are affected by this, the businesses, the manufacturers who you've almost put out of business in this province with your tax policies, let them all have a chance to have their say on this bill so that, before the end of the day, we get the best piece of legislation possible, not something that just George Smitherman likes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from Trinity-Spadina, Etobicoke-Lakeshore, Oshawa and Welland for their input on my address earlier.

I'm not going to get into any more details at this point because I only have a little bit of time left, but I want to reiterate the fact that when Tories and New Democrats are clearly seeing deficiencies of the same kind in a government bill-and the members for Trinity-Spadina and Welland talked about that-it's obvious that there's work to be done on this bill. Therefore, I would implore the members on the other side of the House-and I know you're hearing about it, too. You have reservations about this bill. You have concerns. Your constituents have concerns. You have some real fears about what this might mean to people in the province of Ontario.

This is not a renewable energy bill. This is so much broader and so far-reaching and gives so much unfettered power to a single minister that it is something that all members, of all parties, of all stripes, should be concerned about. We cannot simply allow this to be passed without serious debate, significant committees throughout the province, so that we get it right.