



No. 104B

Nº 104B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 20 November 2000

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 20 novembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

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

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

Index inquiries

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

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

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

Renseignements sur l'index

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

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 20 November 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 20 novembre 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONTINUED PROTECTION FOR PROPERTY TAXPAYERS ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 POURSUivant LES MESURES DE PROTECTION DES CONTRIBUABLES FONCIERS

Mr Young, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to amend the Assessment Act, Municipal Act and other Acts with respect to property taxes / Projet de loi 140, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière, la Loi sur les municipalités et d'autres lois à l'égard de l'impôt foncier.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Willowdale.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): At the outset, I'd like to inform the House that I will be sharing my time with Mr Coburn, the member from Ottawa-Orléans, as well as Mr Dunlop, the member from Simcoe North.

As we discuss the issue of property tax, I think it's important to understand the context in which we are embarking upon this endeavour. One isn't overstating the matter to say that for literally generations in this province, governments of all political stripes, be they New Democrats, Liberals or Conservatives, publicly acknowledged that there were some very serious inequities in the property tax system and that they were simply unacceptable.

Government after government went so far as to commission reports on the property tax system in this province, and over the past three decades we in this building have seen virtually every major report that was commissioned come back and confirm that the implementation of a value-based assessment system was essential. The reports, Mr Speaker, as I'm sure you recall, include the Smith committee report that came back in 1967. The Blair commission reported in 1976, followed by the Goyette report in 1985. We had the GTA task force in 1995 and of course the Who Does What panel in 1996.

Our government promised to correct these inequities, and for our government a promise is a promise kept. That is why during the last term of office our government

came forward with legislation initially introduced in 1997, legislation that was based, if I may add, upon an internationally recognized assessment valuation standard, legislation that set a standard that was modified to reflect the needs of this province and legislation that was intended to, and in fact did, redress a tax system that was in some municipalities so out of date, it was in fact based on assessments conducted 60 years ago.

The province has held extensive consultations over the last four or five years on this issue. Certainly at times it has been a very controversial issue. That is why, as I stand in the Legislature today, I'm proud to say to you that leading up to the introduction of this bill, we at the Ministry of Finance and my colleagues at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing have conducted literally dozens, if not hundreds, of meetings with various stakeholders in order to ensure the bill reflected the concerns and the realities that were there and dealt with by our partners on a daily basis.

I'll provide at this time a very brief list that certainly isn't exhaustive, but does reflect the scope of the consultations that were conducted. They include consultations with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Municipal Financial Officers' Association of Ontario, the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, the Association of Municipal Tax Collectors of Ontario, Ontario Property Tax Assessment Corp and, as I say, more municipalities than time would permit me to review, but they include the city of Toronto, the city of Mississauga, London, Ottawa, Hamilton, Sudbury, Cobourg, representatives from York region, representatives from the region of Peel, Wellington county, and the list goes on and on.

At the same time, in order to ensure that the bill reflected the delicate balance that is essential to ensure that municipalities have the funds to operate and, at the same time, businesses are not smothered by reason of excessive and exorbitant tax increases, we also conferred with numerous representatives of the business sector. These included the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Toronto Board of Trade, the Urban Development Institute, the Fair Rental Policy Organization, natural gas distributors, airport authorities, power dam owners, charitable associations, farm associations, and the list goes on and on.

1850

The proposed legislation, what we're here to talk about this evening, will continue our ongoing commit-

ment to restore fairness to the property tax system. I pause to say that this cannot be accomplished in one day, but it is necessary. The legislation reflects the fact that this must be done over a manageable period of time and through a system that respects the needs and concerns of Ontario's stakeholders.

The new property tax system is based on a principle of property tax fairness. Property owners who own similar properties of similar value in the same community will pay the same taxes. Of course, before the introduction of the first bill that this government brought forward some three or four years ago, there were hundreds, thousands of examples across the province of similar homes on the same street or in similar neighbourhoods in the same municipalities paying markedly different taxes. There really was no good reason for that to continue, other than the fact that to change that would have inevitably meant some considerable disruption to the status quo, a status quo that was inequitable, and would have probably had some political downside or deficit or danger. But it was the right thing to do, and it is what we did.

The new property tax system is one that provides ongoing protection for businesses and will ensure a manageable transition to current value assessment. I mentioned earlier that this wasn't arrived at overnight; it was arrived at after extensive consultations with our partners, both municipal partners and business associations.

The province is making property tax easier, and I think it's important to stress that at this juncture. The province is making the property tax system easier for municipalities to administer by simplifying the limits and basing them on the previous year's taxes, not the pre-1997 taxes. That point came up time and time again in our consultation with our municipal partners. The necessity for them previously to utilize the frozen value assessment made their job very difficult. We as a government listened, we as a government heard and we as a government have acted to make the system easier, to make the system fairer and to ensure that our municipal partners can do their job in a more expeditious manner.

The province will also maximize municipal flexibility to flow through tax decreases by providing municipalities flexible financing to achieve the limits. Business tax increases will be limited to 5% annually. However, municipalities would still have flexibility in meeting the 5% threshold.

This act, if passed by our Legislature, would implement the 1999 budget commitment made by this government to continue limits on property tax increases beyond the year 2000 and to provide municipalities with tax mitigation tools. If passed by the Legislature, the Continued Protection for Property Taxpayers Act would implement the following measures for the year 2001.

It would require municipalities to limit the reform-related tax increases on commercial, industrial and multi-residential properties to 5% per year. The proposed legislation would also give Toronto the option of maintaining its current limit of 2.5% per year. In fact, they would

have the option of doing that each and every year. They have that special status because they previously chose—in fact, were the only municipality across the province—to avail themselves of that opportunity. We have allowed, in this legislation, for them to continue to utilize that tool, should they so desire.

The legislation, in addition, will enable municipalities to use a wide range of tools to achieve limits on tax increases, tools that would include a simplified capping mechanism, optional property taxes, graduated tax increases, simplified phase-in formulas and more flexible financing options. The legislation would require landlords to maintain limits on tax increases for business tenants where the limits previously applied.

It would continue to protect low-income seniors and disabled homeowners by requiring municipalities to provide relief from tax increases, and it would continue to protect charities through a mandatory rebate program.

This act would also implement a new, real-time approach to the taxation of vacant business property, new treatment for power dams and it would make various technical amendments to the Assessment Act and the Municipal Act to improve the equity and the administrative effectiveness of the property tax system across this province.

In 1998, the province imposed mandatory limits on reform-related property tax increases. You will recall that the first year a limit of 10%—that was for the year 1998—was applied, 5% in 1999 and in the third year of that three-year package a further 5% limit was in place, and that was for the year 2000. Without this legislation that we tabled last week and this day, to continue the limits, properties would be taxed based on their full current value assessment in 2001.

In the 1999 budget, we committed to ensuring that all existing tax protection tools would be available to municipalities after 2000. We also committed to those in this province that the current business tax limits would continue in effect every year until tax fairness is fully achieved.

If this legislation is passed, all municipalities would be subject to the 5% limit and, as I say, the only exception would be the 2.5% limit that would be in place for the city of Toronto, should they care to utilize that limit. We are introducing this bill now so that municipalities and taxpayers will have full knowledge of the system that will be in place after the current caps expire at the end of the year. By introducing legislation this fall, municipalities should be in a position to do their tax impact analysis and to make policy decisions in a timely way without delaying the issuance of tax bills for the year 2001.

Our government remains committed to its property tax reform effort and to the implementation of current value assessment. The limits on tax increases are necessary and are essential to ensure a fair and manageable system will be in place to allow for the transition that I described earlier from a badly outdated assessment system to the new CVA system.

Property tax reform is proceeding on track, and the government is pleased with the progress that has been made to date. The legislation is designed to respect differences among municipalities, regardless of where they are on the road toward CVA. It should be noted that municipalities across this province are at different points along that road. There are some municipalities, like the municipality of Halton, which are very close to achieving CVA. There are others, which include the city of Toronto and the municipality in Hamilton, which have a long way to travel down that road. But when individual properties reach their CVA destination, they will no longer, pursuant to this legislation, be subject to the limit.

The 5% limit, or the 2.5% limit if Toronto chooses to go that way, would extend to business tenants as well as to business properties. The limit would only apply to tenants that were subject to the 2.5% or the 10%-5%-5%; that is, the limits would only apply to tenants who occupied the premises before December 31, 1997. Tenants who entered into leases after that date would have had the knowledge of the new property tax system and presumably would have negotiated their tax apportionment terms, those of their lease, with their landlords with the knowledge of the impact of that reform. The tenant limits are designed to protect tenants who negotiated leases prior to the reform without interfering with the new leases that I just described.

The government agrees that business property taxes are too high. We have said that on numerous occasions. The Premier has said it; the Deputy Premier has said it; and I say yet again this evening that property taxes for businesses across this province are by and large too high. That is why we committed to education tax cuts for business property classes. In the 1998 budget, the government introduced an eight-year, \$500-million business education tax reduction to bring business education tax rates down to the provincial average. The cut was to be implemented at a rate of about \$65 million each and every year. The province has announced that it will be accelerating the business education tax cuts so that in the year 2001, instead of it simply being \$65 million, it will be \$130 million. We're doubling it for next year. That will bring the total to \$325 million for the year 2001.

1900

It's important to note as well that we have said clearly and repeatedly to municipalities that if they have above-average rates and wish to reduce their own portion of business taxes, the government will match those cuts. We'll match them dollar for dollar through an accelerated business education tax reduction. There have been some municipalities that have availed themselves of that opportunity.

I also wish to point out that this legislation would add a further measure to bring down high business taxes relative to residential taxes. Municipalities would not be permitted to impose levy increases above the 5% limit on business property taxes if the tax ratio of the class relative to the residential tax ratio is above the prescribed threshold ratio. If the legislation is passed, the threshold

ratios would be set at the provincial average. The province is not forcing municipalities to increase residential taxes. We are not forcing municipalities to increase taxes for homeowners. There is nothing in our legislation—nothing whatsoever—that does this. The decision to raise taxes is clearly a municipal one. It is in the hands of our municipal partners, but there is nothing in this legislation that will require a municipality to do so.

In terms of the reassessment, if there are tax changes among residential properties, this bill gives municipalities a number of tools or mechanisms to address them in a fair and manageable way. Municipalities can choose to phase in tax changes over a period of up to eight years. Municipalities also have the prerogative to provide tax relief. In fact, they have the obligation to provide tax relief to seniors and to disabled homeowners who face tax increases as a result of reassessment.

Because of some of the local media dealing with the issue of property tax reassessment, I feel obliged to take a moment to talk about the fact that a higher property tax assessment does not mean a higher property tax bill. We fully expect that municipalities will do the right thing and reduce their tax mill rates appropriately where average property values have increased so ratepayers are not burdened by higher taxes. If any municipality fails to lower its local tax rate as a result of an average increase in property values, then they are consciously passing on a tax increase to their ratepayers. This would be a local decision, a decision of the municipal council, not a decision of the provincial government. Our government is committed to lowering the tax burden on hard-working Ontarians. That is why we are cutting the education portion of property tax, and we have set that commitment out time and time again.

We are also committed to a more transparent and accountable property tax system in the province of Ontario. Beginning next year, property tax bills across this province will be uniform. They will clearly show how the taxes for an individual property taxpayer are calculated, and they will clearly show how and why any changes in the amount of taxes paid are arrived at. Many residential properties are already at their current value assessment level. Reassessment should not translate into a tax increase for property taxpayers.

I mentioned earlier, and I think it's worth reiterating, that this government undertook this very difficult task, the task of reforming an outdated, antiquated and inequitable property tax system. We undertook this monumental endeavour because we knew that it had to be done. We knew it was the right thing to do. We also knew that these changes couldn't be made overnight. Assessments in many municipalities hadn't been considered for in excess of half a century. The problems that developed took 50 or 60 years in some cases to develop. Clearly they could not have been redressed overnight.

It is this government that had the courage to reform the property tax system, a system that was grossly out of date and was very unfair. Many taxpayers in similar

situations with similar properties were paying very different taxes in the same municipality, and they were facing whopping tax increases. I mentioned earlier that some of our municipal partners have made great inroads toward reaching the CVA level that we're all striving to arrive at. Municipalities like Muskoka district, Halton region, Hastings county, Huron county and Niagara region conducted their own reassessments back in 1995 and 1996 using a 1992 base year. Those municipalities are well on their way to achieving CVA. But municipalities like Toronto, Hamilton-Wentworth, Peel region, Durham region and York region in some cases were operating with assessment bases that dated back as far as 1940. The province is implementing reform in a careful, staged approach, a balanced approach, at each stage balancing the interests of municipalities, business taxpayers and residential taxpayers.

The new limit that is contemplated in this legislation was designed to improve the ease of administration. For 2001 and for future years municipalities will not be required to maintain a frozen assessment listing, and they will not be required to calculate tax changes in relation to each property's pre-reform 1997 taxes. The new limit would be calculated each year based on the taxes paid in the preceding year. We will be working with municipalities to address administration and implementation issues that may arise. We've made that commitment previously and I reiterate it this evening. The province is working closely with our municipal partners to simplify the tax administration process across this province.

The results of this co-operative effort include a better system through uniform tax bills that will be forthcoming to communicate changes, education and training sessions for our municipal partners and analyzing municipal tax policy options.

Any shifts in value resulting from the 2001 reassessment would not have an impact on the 5% limit. The limit represents an allowable tax increase on a property as it moves toward taxation based on its current value assessment. The limit applies when CVA taxes are more than 5% higher than existing taxes. The new assessed values would be relevant to the calculation of a property's CVA taxes, and that would determine whether the property's taxes are increasing or decreasing. It is important to note that a reassessment is not the only factor affecting taxes for an individual property. A municipality's tax policy decisions, in other words, what rate is applied and whether or not they use a phase-in, play a fundamental role in determining the taxes levied on property. The provincial limit of 5% on tax increases on commercial, industrial and multi-residential properties is also a key determination of taxes.

In conclusion, we've come a long way over the last few years toward tax fairness. In 1998 our government reformed the property tax system across the province and introduced current value assessment. Prior to reform, property taxes across this province could properly be described as a patchwork, a system that was cumbersome to administer and difficult, if not impossible, for tax-

payers to understand. Many municipalities had chosen not to update their property tax assessments, with the result, as I indicated earlier, that some were based on calculations that were 25, 35, 40, 50 and 60 years out of date. Outdated assessments resulted in similar properties in the same municipalities paying very different taxes, and that was simply unfair.

With this proposed legislation, we are confident that we will move forward to attain our ultimate goal of treating all property taxpayers in a fair and respectful manner.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1910

Hon Mr Klees: Mr Speaker, I would like unanimous consent to now move a motion regarding back-to-school legislation for Hamilton-Wentworth.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Klees: I'm seeking unanimous consent to now revert to introduction of bills to allow the introduction of the appropriate labour legislation; and

That the House immediately proceed to second reading debate for the remainder of the evening, time being divided equally among the three caucuses; and

That at the end of the evening the question on second reading be put; and,

That at the end of tomorrow's debate the final vote for third reading be put.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Klees has asked for unanimous consent to revert to introduction of bills to allow the introduction of the appropriate labour legislation; and

That the House immediately proceed to second reading debate for the remainder of the evening, time being divided equally among the three caucuses; and

That at the end of the evening the question on second reading be put.

Is there something further to that? That's fine?

Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BACK TO SCHOOL ACT
(HAMILTON-WENTWORTH
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD), 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE RETOUR
À L'ÉCOLE (HAMILTON-WENTWORTH
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD)

Mrs Ecker, on behalf of Mr Stockwell, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board / Projet de loi 145, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant la fédération appelée Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the minister wish to make a short statement?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I think the two parties in the dispute have attempted to come to an agreement. They cannot, from all the reports we have received. We've received an advisement from the Education Relations Commission that the school year for these children could be in jeopardy, so we feel this is the appropriate and prudent step for the government to take.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BACK TO SCHOOL ACT (HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD), 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE RETOUR À L'ÉCOLE (HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD)

Mrs Ecker, on behalf of Mr Stockwell, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board / Projet de loi 145, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant la fédération appelée Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.

The Deputy Speaker: (Mr Michael A. Brown): Minister.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for allowing us to move forward with this. I will be speaking for some time. Another speaker from my caucus may wish to share the time. I believe the MPP for Stoney Creek will also wish to say a few words on this important piece of legislation.

I'm very pleased to participate in this debate on the proposed Back to School Act. The purpose of this bill is quite simply to get 40,000 public elementary students in Hamilton-Wentworth back in their classrooms and to do that as quickly as we can. If the bill is approved by this Legislature, the students can be back in class the first day after royal assent, and it will certainly be none too soon for many of the parents who have been wrestling with this situation for many, many days now.

Like the parents, the government does not want our children's education disrupted because of disputes between school boards and unions. We do want the children

in school, to be able to learn, to grow, to be taught and guided by their teachers. That's certainly what the parents have said to us very, very clearly. We want students to benefit from our very challenging new curriculum and from the assurance of quality provided by the province-wide standards that we've enacted in a whole range of areas.

We believe that elementary students in Hamilton have had their education interrupted—disrupted—long enough and we have given, we believe, the school board and the teachers' union in this case time enough to try and achieve a mutually acceptable negotiated settlement. The priority now is clearly to get these children back in school.

I had the privilege of meeting with representatives of the parents in this community last week. They had arranged to come and meet me through the efforts of my colleague from Stoney Creek, Mr Clark. We've had many, many calls from parents both in my office and Mr Clark's office expressing their concerns and their views about this and they've been pushing very hard. Actually, I must say that the parents have been very careful about saying they don't want to take sides. They know there are important issues here at stake but their bottom line, and as you would expect their bottom line to be, is that their children need to be back in school. Enough is enough as far as they are concerned.

We certainly respect that there is a collective bargaining process here. That is important. As I've said many times over the last couple of days, a locally arrived at solution, a collective agreement that has been arrived at between the union and the school board is certainly the preferable option here, as it is in any of the these circumstances. But at a certain point, at a certain time, I think the needs of the children must clearly be the first and the foremost priority. That's why we have taken this step today and why we've moved forward on many of the other reforms we are implementing within the education system.

For the benefit of the parents who may be listening to this, I'd like to outline some of those keys areas. I think it is important when we see the sort of disruptions that do occur sometimes during this process that parents need to know that there is a bigger, broader picture here that is about quality education—a broader picture that is aimed at providing our children with an education that has better quality, that has more accountability to parents, to taxpayers, to students, and that quite simply is dedicated to improving student achievement. That is indeed what we are attempting to do with many of the reforms we promised both in 1995 and again in 1999.

We have accomplished, I believe, a great deal. There's no question that there is a lot more to be done but there are many accomplishments that we can point to, and do so, to remind everyone of how far we have come in these quality reforms.

For example, we now have a more equitable and fairer level of funding for all school boards across the province. It's funding that is based on the enrolment needs of

students, on the number of students a board has, rather than on the tax base of local communities. I think, as many people will recall, that the way education was funded before, to use the common term in the federal election when they're talking about health care all the time—the media keeps using the term “two-tier”—in effect we had a two-tier education system in Ontario. If you were lucky enough to be born in a community that had a very rich tax base, you could have a school board that could raise taxes, get a lot of revenue, spend a lot money on your education. But if you were unlucky enough to be a child born in a poor tax assessment area, the school board would not have the ability to raise appropriate funds for your education.

Not only this government, but many, many other parties and reports have indicated that this was unfair, and so we have established a funding mechanism, a funding support for boards, that is more equitable, that does reflect the unique needs of boards, that does reflect the enrolment needs of boards. This is something that is in place now and has had some very, very important positive changes. For example, we're starting to see more of the money in education going into classrooms. That was the clear priority that parents wanted to see. It's a clear priority that we have set as a government. For example, this year, classroom funding is projected to account for more than 65% of the operating funding of the school system. So we're starting to see that shift and, again, it's a good thing, but more work clearly needs to be done.

1920

We've increased classroom spending, but we've defined and protected it, too. One of the things that many parents, students and teachers had complained about was that as the cost of education was going up and as education property taxes were going up, teachers in the classroom were not seeing the equivalent increase in resources for them and their important work. So we have defined, protected and increased classroom spending. There is actually, through the accurate figures and numbers that we put out, some \$700 million more today, this school year, than was there in 1997. That's a very important improvement and change that has been made.

What we are asking all of our education partners, the school boards, to do is to live within their budget, live within their means, as you and I and all of the folks who may be watching tonight—all of those parents in Hamilton-Wentworth—do in our daily lives: set priorities so we can live within our means. We have enhanced education, enhanced classroom spending, spending more on education than has been spent before, but we do request that our school boards live within their means and their budget.

This particular board, the union that represents these particular teachers, is being asked to do no more or no less than all of the other school boards across the province and to come to a fair collective agreement, which of course, as I've noted, they have been unable to do. That's why we are taking this step.

One of the other improvements and changes, the quality reforms that we have moved forward with, is to make sure that the focus of the system and of education is always on higher student achievement, so we have a stronger focus on teaching and learning—things like the new curriculum that has been brought in. It's more challenging, it's more rigorous and it is requiring our students to learn more in earlier grades. The reason it is doing that is because that is the knowledge, those are the skills and the abilities that our young people need in order to succeed, not only in high school or in the next grade, but also in whatever their destination may be—college, university, workplace, trade, apprenticeship. Whatever their location or destination is when they leave high school, we have to make sure that the curriculum will support that, and this new curriculum does. Frankly, because it is a more rigorous and more challenging curriculum, that has made it all the more important that the government take this step to legislate the teachers back to end the board's lockout so that the students can be in the classroom to get the help they need on learning this new curriculum. That's another important change that's dedicated to better quality, more accountability and increasing student achievement.

But having that new curriculum on its own is not going to help if we can't ensure that not only are our teachers excellent and committed—of which we all know there are many thousands out there—they have to be able to teach it to the best of their ability, and our students have to be able to learn it to the best of their ability. We assess that to see if we are meeting that standard. We are starting to do that through regular standardized tests, regular assessments of basic skills, so that we can identify if there are problems and find out where those problems are, why those problems are there and take steps to deal with them. Standardized testing is very much part of the quality reforms we brought forward for accountability and for a better focus on increased student achievement.

As I said, the job is not done, but we know there has been significant progress. We know that through the work of many hundreds of people who have been part of the curriculum and the standardized testing process we are making progress. To continue that job and to keep doing what we know we need to do in the community of Hamilton-Wentworth, we need to get the students back into school.

It's also important to acknowledge that we need to be fair to the parties involved in the labour dispute: the school board and the teachers' union. I believe that this legislation—and we've certainly written it to accomplish this—would provide a fair and balanced approach for the two parties.

First of all, and of course the primary priority, the thing that parents see as the most important priority at the moment, is to get our children back in their classrooms. This legislation, if passed, will do that very, very quickly.

This legislation will also help the school board take the appropriate steps to ensure that the curriculum requirements for our students are met during the balance of

the school year. For many parents that has certainly been the concern they have been expressing, that they want to make sure their students are not left behind because of this disruption. That would indeed be unfair to those students. So what the legislation proposes to do is to clearly state that the three days currently scheduled as professional activity days would be changed to instructional days for the students, to take a first step to do this, to help the students get the curriculum they may have missed because of the disruption. It also gives the board and the teachers' union options that will allow them to reach a fair settlement without further resort to sanctions that hurt kids.

I think it's important to take a quick look at the history of this dispute over the last couple of months. As I said earlier, we continue to believe that the best way to resolve labour issues such as this is through locally negotiated solutions without government intervention so that the two bodies can come to a fair agreement within the policy, the legislative standards, the framework that the provincial government has set and continues to set. I might say, because I know periodically our critics express concerns about that, that provincial governments have certainly had the legislative responsibility, indeed the constitutional responsibility, to set province-wide educational standards, and that is something we promised the voters we would do and we are indeed doing. School boards, as the deliverers of education, are requested to live within that policy framework and, as I said earlier, of course within their means, within their budgets.

Yes, locally negotiated solutions are extremely important. Many boards and unions are indeed reaching these agreements across the province, and we believe that there have been sufficient resources put forward for the parties to reach a fair settlement. But it's very clear that the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the elementary teachers' union in this case have not been able to achieve that local settlement, and that the effect on students has of course reached the point where action must be taken.

The Hamilton-Wentworth board, it is worth noting, has reached a settlement with its secondary teachers, its high school teachers. It is, again, important to note that across the province approximately half of the teachers' bargaining units already have contracts or are in the process of ratifying contracts as they go through this process.

In Hamilton-Wentworth, this board and its elementary teachers have been in contract negotiations since the spring of this year, so this step that the government is taking is not legislation that has been hasty or precipitated in the step we're taking today. Both parties have had ample time to work out the difficulties and disagreements that they may well have had at the table, formally and informally, and of course that has indeed not been the case.

The provincial government has certainly attempted to assist in this. The Ministry of Labour has tried to help the parties come to a settlement. In addition to conciliation

assistance, there's been a mediator appointed by the minister and the mediator has met with the parties on five days—October 25, October 29, November 6, November 7 and November 11—but despite the efforts of the mediator, despite all of this, the parties, in the mediator's view, for example, are still too far apart and no resolution has been in sight.

On October 31, in response to the announcement of the local elementary teachers' union of plans for rotating strikes—because, again, as many people will know, the local union decided to do rotating strikes from school to school—the school board's view was that they could not manage this in a way that provided appropriate supervision and safety for children. So the school board's response was to actually have a lockout of the teachers that affected some 116 schools. Here we are now in the fourth week in which 40,000 children have not been in school, a very serious circumstance indeed.

1930

I think contract negotiations between teachers and school boards are very important, because both boards and the teacher federations are key education partners in our agenda for quality education, for having a system that does indeed focus on improved student achievement and is more accountable to all of its key stakeholders, parents and students. They indeed have been key partners. I have met continually, and my staff have met, with all of these partners. I will continue to do that because I certainly see that, one, as part of my job as the minister but, secondly, as the best way to get advice and input about how to do the things we, as a government, did promise to the voters we would do in improving the quality and accountability in the education system. They are key partners, and collective bargaining contract negotiations are an important step.

We want teachers and school boards to be able to negotiate fair and reasonable contracts without disruption to students and the classroom. While we know there are important issues at the table, there are things that boards or a union will fight very hard for, and that is certainly their role in this case. Many of those issues can be very important issues and can have a major impact on the teacher's job, the kind of job the teacher can do, on the students' learning circumstances, in many cases on the board's ability to finance certain programs, how much they want to use classroom resources for teacher resources. Those are important issues, but despite the importance of those issues, I continue to state to all of our education partners that I do not believe any of those issues are sufficient to justify disruption in a child's education.

We continue to work and meet with our partners to find ways around the problems, to find solutions to resolve these various issues at whatever table we can do that. As the media may well have reported in your community, Mr Speaker, I had a very good meeting on Friday with representatives of all of our key education partners, both provincial associations that represent parent groups, for example, in the public, the Catholic and

francophone systems, that represent school board trustees, board officials, the teacher federations, to talk about a number of the issues we still have to resolve.

It was unfortunate, however, that the Ontario Teachers' Federation, which of course is the province-wide association, if you will, that has been structured to represent the different teacher unions and to speak on behalf of teachers in Ontario—and it was quite disappointing not only for myself but also for the other partners who had taken the time to participate in this meeting that they chose to attend, but not to participate. It was unfortunate because the mood in that room was that they wished to work together to resolve some of the issues we are facing. There were a number of excellent recommendations, suggestions and policy options that many of the groups had worked on and put forward for consideration. It was unfortunate that the teachers' federation in this circumstance did not choose to participate, did not choose to help resolve this issue.

However, the will of that room, the sense of that room was that we need to move forward, that if they cannot be part of the solution on this issue, we were still going to seek a resolution for the benefit of not only our students in the classroom but also for our front-line teachers. I'm sure there will be many other discussions and conversations as we consider the options that were put forward at that meeting of all of the important stakeholders to resolve some of the issues regarding co-instructional activities that we are facing in some schools across the province.

We do recognize that local solutions, working together, talking these things out at the table, are certainly a preferable way to go. Unfortunately, if that is not an option where the best solution being a local solution is not available, then we need to make a step to resolve this issue. In many cases, we are seeing local solutions that are being reached, solutions that are mutually acceptable, that are fiscally responsible, that are negotiated settlements, and that is due to a lot of hard work of people in the system to make sure that happens. Again, in those agreements they are reaching, their goal is to be fair to both teachers and to taxpayers, and we would certainly expect that.

Just to give you some statistics to see the progress that has been made, the most recent information that is available to the ministry—and of course this is something that we pay some attention to, that we do track—is that of the bargaining units province-wide, 44 have renewed collective agreements starting in September of this fall or they have tentative agreements that they are in the process of finalizing or ratifying, wherever they are in the particular process and in progress. Already 18 have agreements that run from September 1998 to the end of August 2001.

So, there has indeed been progress made. There have indeed been steps by boards and bargaining units to try to resolve these issues. That's something parents and students appreciate and I know teachers appreciate. I had the privilege—even before I was education minister but cer-

tainly since becoming minister—of meeting and talking to many dedicated and committed teachers, teachers who work hard for the children, who go above and beyond for the children and put the students first. They didn't go to teachers' college to stand on a sidewalk with a placard. They tell me they went because they wanted to teach, they wanted to have that reward, that joy of making a difference in a child's life. It is also for those teachers that I think this step is very important, so they can be where they would like to be, back in the classroom with the students, doing what they do best, as well.

The government thinks we have given the school board and the teachers' union the time to achieve a mutually acceptable negotiated settlement. The priority is clearly to try to get the children back to school. This bill proposes quite simply to end the lockout by the board, the strike action by the union. First of all, we have to pass this bill, and I appreciate the efforts that our House leader has made to try to ensure that this legislation can get on today and hopefully be finalized tomorrow, because operation of the schools can resume on the first school day following royal assent. It is certainly our hope that if we can get this passed tomorrow, we will be able to follow very quickly with royal assent so that our parents will know that the schools will be open and so that we can get our children back in the classroom.

Of course, and I mentioned this a little earlier, one of the parents' major concerns—certainly something they expressed to my colleague from Stoney Creek, certainly something that the parents talked to me about last week when I was meeting the parent representatives here at Queen's Park—was that the children would have the opportunity to catch up on the work they had missed. When you look historically at what has happened over previous years, when you look at how long some strikes have gone on in some school boards over the years, you can see that some have actually been quite lengthy. There was a strike of some 80 days in one particular school board. Others have been of 40 and 50 days. One can just imagine the frustration that those parents, those teachers, those students had in those particular lengthy disputes.

But what is very different about this particular situation is that of course with the new curriculum it makes it that much tougher for students to catch up, to make sure they don't lose their school year. Of course that has been one of the important criteria that I know the Education Relations Commission has used in the advisement, the advice, they have given me as minister and the government today, because the ERC, as it's called, the Education Relations Commission, is an independent body whose job it is to monitor labour disruption in education, to declare or to provide advice to the government when they think that strike can result in students losing their school year. They had considered it briefly last week, I understand, had taken a close look over the last several days, and today, as a matter of fact early this afternoon, to be precise, wrote a letter to me which clearly stated that it was their view that the school year would be in

jeopardy for these students if we did not act and advised us to do that.

1940

The other thing that it's important to note, and I know there have been some concerns, is that the school board made a final offer or another offer to the teachers on Friday, I believe. I'm sure the Minister of Labour can answer any questions that critics or parents or the media may well have about the details of the collective agreement process here. But they have put forward another offer. This legislation recognizes that step is something that can be allowed to proceed. It might well come to an agreement. The teachers might well decide to agree to that offer, in which case the issue is settled. If that does not end up resolving it, this legislation of course has brought the students back into class, into school, if this is passed. But it does recognize that there has been that step taken by the board over the weekend. So I think it's important to make sure that is clear.

The ERC had sent a letter to the government. Early this afternoon we received it. Upon receiving that advice from the ERC, the government finalized the legislation that we had been drafting over the last couple of days. We made sure it reflected the change in circumstances over the weekend and we sought to introduce it with unanimous consent earlier today.

Losing out on the curriculum, not being able to complete the curriculum, is an issue that was of concern to the ERC. It's certainly an issue that is of concern to the parents. This legislation helps the board meet that responsibility. They certainly have that obligation to try and take steps, hopefully in co-operation with their teachers, to resolve this. The bill does take one step: it amends the board's school year calendar to change the designation, as I mentioned, of three professional activity days to instructional days for students. We think that will provide some additional time, and there may be some other steps that the board and the teachers wish to do to make sure our students in this community receive the curriculum information they need.

The bill also, I think it's important to note, would prohibit further strike or lockout action while allowing the school board and the teachers' union to continue working toward a fair settlement. Certainly there is still room there for them to do that. If not, an arbitrator can take that step. And of course the bill specifies that any new collective agreement—and this is probably self-evident but it is in this legislation—must comply with the Education Act.

This will ensure that the agreement is fair to students, that it recognizes and protects important investments we've made to promote quality education, including lower average class size, for example, something we have taken considerable steps on, something we've invested more money this school year for. For example, \$263 million has gone to school boards this year just for smaller class size. We've taken legislative steps not only to start putting limits on those class size averages but also to make sure, if the board is taking that additional money

and that resource and are cashing the cheques, if you will, they are indeed applying it to that goal. That is something we are going to be tracking and taking a look at. The legislation that was passed earlier this spring does indeed give us the ability to look at that, to examine that, to investigate where there are concerns from parents. We recognize that much more needs to be done in this area as well. That is one of the issues, obviously, that it is required a collective agreement must abide by.

Having resources for more textbooks and more class supplies is certainly an important priority. We've put more resources out to do that. We have had some boards that have been quite clear that they've used that money to settle their agreements, and I think those parents in that community and those trustees are judging whether that's an appropriate use or not of their resources.

The other supports we put in place that we expect any collective agreement would continue to respect are the supports for our early reading initiative, the additional monies that were put forward for junior kindergarten to grade 3 on the literacy side to help make sure that our students were getting off to a good start in terms of the literacy training they need, and obviously too the protected funding for special education. As many have heard me say in this House, because I think it's an important fact for parents to hear, monies for special education have indeed increased. Again this year—this is the third year in a row—we have increased spending on special-needs students. The increase to the education system this year was 12%.

Not only is it a question of spending more money, but of also making sure that boards are using that money appropriately, because in many cases the parents' expectation of what happens from board to board varies. So among of the things we are putting in place are clear standards so parents will know the expectations they can have for a board, for the programs that board is able to offer their child, and so we can also make sure that the increased resources that are going in there are being used appropriately and that parents are seeing that difference in the classroom. We clearly know that more needs to be done in that area. That is another important quality standard that we have put in place that of course any collective agreement, whether it's in Hamilton-Wentworth or otherwise, will have to abide by and respect.

I know the children in Hamilton-Wentworth want to return to their classrooms with their teachers. I know the parents certainly want them to be there. I suspect many of the teachers want to be there. So I believe that by supporting this legislation, the Back to School Act (Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board), we are putting students first. We will help to resolve this issue. I would respectfully ask all members of this Legislature to support the legislation and to allow it to proceed through second and third reading as quickly as we can so we can get our children back.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I was called into service at short notice, but that having been said, I can assure the

Speaker and members of this House that this has been a hot topic over the last few days.

If we could get some order here, perhaps members could hear some of the things that need to be said. I think there are some negotiations going on behind the scene here, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr McMeekin: I feel a little bit tonight like I felt in the past as mayor of that great municipality the town of Flamborough, the one municipality in all of Ontario which actually lowered local taxes for an unprecedented six years in a row without gutting services. We found our reward at the end of the day, Dom, to be the forced amalgamation of a number of very prudent and well-run municipalities into something else. That having been said, I suspect there are a number of parents and teachers and educators and union leaders who are listening tonight, so I want to make some connections here.

When we dealt as a town with a number of issues that came up, it was often a lot like having to jump in the river to save those who were drowning. We got very good at that. We got very good at doing the fundraising drives, at training the people who would jump in to try to rescue situations that were entirely not of our own making. Finally it dawned on me that it was time to go upstream and look at who was throwing them in, and with that decision I decided to run for a seat in the Ontario Legislature. Recent history will show that I'm here to speak to some of these important issues.

1950

I want to say at the outset, having listened to the Minister of Education, who I know has a very real concern for what's been going on, and her colleague and my good friend from Stoney Creek, who raised the issue on a number of occasions, that while it's fair to be critical, it's also critical to be fair. I think in the context of this particular place and space in time, it needs to be said that in an ideal world we wouldn't have the kind of disruption that has been so evident in the community that I have the privilege of representing, particularly in the educational sector. In an ideal world there wouldn't be strikes, there wouldn't be lockouts, but it's clear that we don't live in an ideal world. In that context, I want to just say that if there's anything that both parties do clearly agree on, or appear to agree on, it is that they're not the only players or perhaps even the pivotal players in this particular issue.

Our education critic, who is obviously out writing some very lengthy presentation that he'll make, I'm assuming, with respect to debate on third reading, tells us that in Ontario in terms of public education since the government opposite has come to power we've seen cuts of about \$1.6 billion in education. My colleagues on this side of the House tell me that—was it Haldimand where there was—

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: Brant—a cumulative decrease in educational funding of some 8%. In Hamilton-Wentworth, the board where the legislation contemplates ending the

labour disruption, there has been in fact a cut of about \$1,100 per student in educational funding. That has had a very debilitating effect on educational issues in the community and it has made the job of negotiating a collective agreement very difficult.

I mentioned earlier that there are some things that even the parties that are in dispute seem to agree on, and one of those is the seeming abandonment by the government of their commitment to public education, with the funding cuts and what have you. I can speak from experience, the coming together of the two school boards. The old Wentworth county school board seldom, if ever, called upon the government for funding to build new schools because they were so well run; actually, we had a surplus at amalgamation. With that amalgamation came a whole series of problems, most notably pitting community against community around the issue of the potential closure of community schools.

Dom and David, I know that's a big issue in Hamilton, the lifeblood of communities being the local community schools being put at risk. The member for Hamilton West and I attended a meeting recently with respect to the transportation cuts, some \$973,000 that was arbitrarily cut from the budget, which now puts 314 of our rural kids at significant physical risk and in harm's way. The response of one of the political leaders in the town was to say, "Look, Mr MPP, kids die every day. Get used to it." That's the kind of milieu we've been thrust into.

I just want to say a little bit further on the issue of the two parties that on the surface are seemingly in dispute on their agreement, the chair of the school board's negotiating committee, the vice-chair of the school board and the former chair of the Hamilton school board, Mr Mulholland, wrote to the minister recently, and I'm sure she'll recall the letter. He said, essentially, that the discriminatory and very prejudice-filled funding formula made it really impossible for his school board to negotiate a fair collective agreement. The member for Hamilton East referenced that in one of his questions to the minister not that many days ago, when he got up and read portions of that letter. When the chair of the negotiating committee, who the minister referenced has put the final offer on the table, laments as publicly as he did the kind of shortfall that this government has caused, it ought to cause us all to pause and to reflect on the future of public education in this province.

We've seen what happens with the kinds of changes and lack of accountability that have come about as a result of the centralization of certain services and the pitting of community against community, and I would mention as a footnote the \$35-million shift vis-à-vis the business education tax, particularly with respect to industrial properties in the Hamilton-Wentworth area, that has come about directly as a result of the arbitrary decision of a couple of years back to amalgamate the school boards.

All of that having been said, over the last couple of weeks I can attest, as can other members from the area, that we have had a number of people contact us with respect to the concerns they have, mostly parents who

don't understand why grown-up people just can't seem to get their act together. You try to explain that it's really difficult in Ontario, as the government continues to abandon the funding of the public education system, to provide the kind of quality education that parents want.

One of my colleagues made reference to the ISA grants and specifically the children with special needs and his experience as a principal. He was sharing with me earlier today that with the process of having to apply for certain grants, there were seven young people in his school system who were, upon certain changes being made by the ministry, denied the help they needed. That's the kind of thing we're seeing in education, and frankly, I think it needs to be said tonight, the kinds of issues and the kinds of concerns of good teachers all across this province in every jurisdiction, not just Hamilton-Wentworth, because this problem isn't unique to Hamilton. By the way, this isn't the first and the last dispute that we'll be asked to deal with. There have been other bills that have made it virtually impossible for boards to reach agreement if they even come to the bargaining table.

I'm going to refrain from looking at the quickly prepared bullet points and just do some sharing directly with respect to my concern here. I have already mentioned that in the last several weeks I've had about 600 e-mails and calls—Brad, you've probably had just as many—with respect to this dispute and the very real concern that children are being caught in the middle, some think even being used as pawns by folk who just can't seem to get their act together. The simple truth is that the party that can't get their act together are those that are determining educational policy. They can't get their act together in this province.

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: Absolutely. I'm glad you agree with me.

Interjection.

2000

Mr McMeekin: If you listen, I'll explain it, because it's very clear we have touched a sensitive nerve on the other side of the House. They have a lot of sensitive nerves when it comes to abandoning the needs of kids. They do a lot of talking about kids and education and their concern about their well-being, but where I come from the proof is in the pudding, and when we see the vice-chair of the school board writing and saying, "You've tied one hand behind my back, because the funding formula simply doesn't provide the kinds of resources we need to come up with a fair and equitable contract," I think it says an awful lot. I'm glad to see the other minister is getting involved now and we've got his attention too. You can always tell you're scoring points when the opposition—they're practising, they're getting ready, Michael, for their days in opposition, right? Soon, very, soon if it keeps up in health care and education and—

Interjection.

Mr McMeekin: Yes. Well, you'll get used to it.

Interjections.

Mr McMeekin: For some of us it's a genetic trait, but we won't get into that.

I'm very concerned, as I said earlier, that while it's fair to be critical, it's also critical to be fair. I'm concerned that we need to find ways to get the system working again. That's the good news. But the bad news is that this particular bill and the way it's framed really institutes, almost institutionalizes, the kind of unfairness that is causing a lot of people in the Hamilton-Wentworth area to raise the distrust level that they have for the government.

You heard the Minister of Education pleading last week for the sides to get together and come up with an offer, and they did that. The school board decided they would exercise their options within existing legislation to have the final-offer vote and, lo and behold, notwithstanding the Education Relations Commission's acknowledgement that kids may now have their education at risk, even the Education Relations Commission was pleading with the government to defer inflicting this legislation, as I recall, until after we had some indication from the teachers as to whether that final offer would be acceptable.

Let me focus specifically, if I can for a couple of minutes, on the mediation-arbitration aspect of it. It's clear to even the most casual observer that this bill is going to pass, and there's some good news in that inasmuch as it'll have the kids back in school I think as early as Wednesday. I like that part of the bill. What I don't like is when the minister talks about good-faith arbitration and specifically talks about the arbitrator having exclusive jurisdiction and coming in with an agreement acceptable to both parties, but then falls back into that old pattern again of stacking the deck, tying the hands of the arbitrator, saying that through the infliction of unrealistic guidelines, almost ensuring the bad-faith aspects of this particular bill, the minister would have us believe—notwithstanding the letter from the vice-chair of the school board who says his hands are tied and there simply isn't enough money because of the government's funding formula to finance the kinds of changes we want to see—that this mediator-arbitrator is somehow going to come in and just work magic.

I had suggested to the minister in a couple of conversations we had that there was another way of handling this dispute. Simply put, it would have been to have requested the parties present, and the minister herself as a representative of the government, to enter a period of normalization where administrators and teachers would go back to administrating and teaching respectively, and that there would be a 90-day cooling-off period. There's some vague reference to the 90-day period here through which the mediation-arbitration will occur, where the minister would intervene and perhaps claim some ownership, were she fair about it, as to the role she's played in terms of creating some of these difficulties. In a sense, it would be what I would call no-fault legislation. You wouldn't be laying the blame at

somebody else's feet. You create the problem, then you abandon the system and run away from it, and rather than pointing direction, you want to point fingers: it's the teachers' or the school board's problem.

For what it's worth, with respect to this particular legislation I think it would have been helpful if there had been some pointed acknowledgement in the legislation that fair arbitration—if you're asking the two parties to enter into a fair arbitration process, after all, you presumably want a mutually acceptable mediator-arbitrator to—

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): They're perplexed at the word "fair."

Mr McMeekin: Yes, I know "fair" is difficult. It's f-a-i-r, fair. You know fair? It means goodwill, honest, upfront, you know? I've got to tell you, if there had been some reference in the legislation to fairness, if there had been some reference in the legislation to not tying the hands of the arbitrator, if there had been some possibility built into the legislation that an arbitrator might come back and say, "Madam Minister, members of the government that she represents, the fundamental problem that's made it difficult for us to come up with a solution here is the lack of funding that's been made available," that would be fair.

I don't know how this is going to unwind, but I think it's unfortunate that we ought to be looking at laying blame on one party. As my 12-year-old said to me the other day—my 12-year-old gets it. She said, my 12-year-old, "Nobody's guilty but everybody's responsible, including the government."

So I want to say to this government, we'll discuss this in caucus tomorrow around exactly how this may unfold and we'll be looking forward to the debate. But I want to tell you now, we're into pointing directions, not fingers. The direction we want to go in is a long-term direction that supports public education and the teachers and the parents and the children who access that to build a stronger, healthier Ontario. I hope that's something members opposite will, in the context of this debate, finally come to understand.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I want to tell you, and I suspect people suspect this, that I don't support back-to-work legislation. I don't support it under any circumstances. I regret being in a Parliament—and it's not the first one; you guys aren't the first guys to pass back-to-work legislation. I understand the rationale provided, and I've had the arguments made to me over the course of today, trust me, in terms of the legislation.

I was the one who said no earlier today. I said no first; I said no again. I tell you that I'm going to vote against the legislation. I'm going to tell you as well—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): There's yelling back and forth. That's not allowed.

Mr Kormos: I'm going to tell you as well that I would have felt incredibly uncomfortable merely voting against the legislation without having said no to the

search for unanimous consent in an effort to speed this through first, second and third readings in about one day.

It's a convenient position to take, to say, "I'm opposing the legislation, but I'm going to do everything I can to facilitate its speedy passage." You see, if you don't believe in the legislation, then you shouldn't be participating in its speedy passage.

2010

I'm not sure I had a whole lot of friends here in this Legislature before today. I'm confident I have a few less now than I did earlier this afternoon. I have no regrets about that. One of the problems I encounter, you see, is I can say no, but if I'm saying no alone as one of 103 people, all it takes is for a 30-second absence from the chamber for the government to stand and make the request for unanimous consent again. And God bless. They believe in back-to-work legislation; I don't. I understand that difference of opinion.

I found it somewhat difficult to sustain my position without the support of not three other members of the Legislature, not two other members of the Legislature, not even one other member of the Legislature. I found it difficult to sustain my position because it was unsustainable. At some point, I was going to be out of here for three or four minutes and a request for unanimous consent to have this rammed through first, second and third reading in one fell swoop would have been made and there would have been nobody to say no.

So I apologize to the folks who would have expected me to continue to say no this evening and through into tomorrow, when of course the government, after introducing the bill in the proper way, would have been entitled to seek unanimous consent to proceed immediately to second reading. The fact remains that, yes, the bill will pass. The bill will pass with some opposition by opposition parties, and it's my view that the bill will pass too soon. One of the observations I make is that I've been made aware that teachers are currently in the process of voting on a position. I understand the resentment of those teachers who say, "Why don't you at least let us finish that vote before you proceed with back-to-work legislation?"

I read the report from the ERC—a page and a half—and you don't gotta be a rocket scientist to know that after several weeks of missed school, you're getting close to the point where you're jeopardizing a kid's school year. You don't need the ERC to tell you that, do you? But the ERC letter was waved today as, all of a sudden, some sort of urgency to the matter. The government knew that this strike had reached some pretty serious impasses over the course of the last several weeks; I don't think there's any question about that. There were rumours already last week that back-to-work legislation was in the works. They were probably pretty good rumours.

I found it rather strange that the government couldn't have its bill ready to be read earlier today at first readings, when bills are supposed to be read. I don't want to suggest that there's anything nefarious going on over

there. People draw those inferences for themselves. They don't need me to suggest it. People out there have got a pretty good handle on what's happening over there. But by appearing late with the bill, it has added to the sense of urgency and may have been used to generate this sense of need to pass it first, second and third reading in one fell swoop.

I'll tell you what I did. Oh yes, I'm not bloodied. They didn't knock me out. But, trust me, I had all sorts of people leaning on me real heavy today, and I have no apologies to them or to any of you. I managed. For whatever reasons, the government wanted to proceed with first, second and third reading, and the government agreed at the end of the day to at least have second reading this evening and third reading tomorrow afternoon, so at the very least there's some debate on this matter, because otherwise there wouldn't have been any debate; there wouldn't have been any opportunity for anybody in this Legislature to stand up and say why they supported the bill or why they opposed it.

Is the debate sufficient? Probably not. But at the end of the day, were very many government members going to stand up and participate in it had it been longer? Probably not. We've seen that too many times, haven't we? The government members will actually miss their turn in the routine as we progress from one party to the other because from their point of view, I suppose, there's either simply nothing more to say or there's nothing they want to say for the public record.

Again, I regret that I reached the conclusion that I would be unable to sustain the "no" position. I reached that conclusion because there would have been some period of time in which I had to be out of the chamber for reasons natural or otherwise that would have given the government an opportunity to again seek unanimous consent.

What I do find of concern is that nobody else wanted to say no. I understand why government members didn't want to say no, because they support the bill. They want to see it passed speedily. This government is an anti-union government; it has strong anti-union sentiments. There's no secret about that. I'm not saying anything offensive to any of the members of this government. Their history with respect to labour legislation speaks for itself, whether it's the repeal of Bill 40, the onset of the incredible attack against teachers with Bill 160, through to Bill 69, the most recent bill, dealing with first-contract bargaining rights, the proposed amendments to restore us back to a 60-hour work week, turning the clock back to the days of my grandparents. This government has a strong anti-union bent, anti-worker bent. I understand that. Clearly it has support for its views. There's enough support for its views out there that this government managed to get itself elected in 1995 and again in 1999. But I tell you, there's clearly as well support for contrary views, because you'll note that the two parties that occupy the opposition benches occupy one half of this Parliament.

So once again I find it sad and disappointing, but I came to the conclusion that I couldn't sustain my "no" position. I find it sadder that the reason I couldn't sustain that is because I was very much a minority of one, not that I haven't been a minority of one before, and there's nothing inherently wrong with being a minority of one. If you believe the position you're taking is correct, you've got to take the consequences that accompany it.

What I am going to question is when this comes for a vote—and I'm going to stand for a recorded vote. I hope, again, there are at least four others who stand with me when it comes time for a recorded vote, because I want those Conservatives who support back-to-work legislation to stand in their places and be counted, and I want to see opposition members who are opposed to it stand in their places and be counted. Then I want to ask those opposition members how it is that they would oppose the bill in a vote but not say no when the government needed their consent to expedite the bill through the Legislature. If a bill is bad enough to oppose, why isn't it bad enough to slow down? If a bill is bad enough to oppose, why isn't it bad enough to demand full debate? If a bill is bad enough to vote against, why are people walking some sort of comfortable middle-of-the-road line where they want to be all things to all people, where they want to straddle that fence? "Oh, I don't want this group mad at me, but then I don't want this group mad at me either." They want to play all sides. Unfortunately it usually doesn't work out that way. The Tories understand whom they're for, where they're coming from, where they want to go to. I understand it too. It frightens me; it causes me a whole lot of concern. I dare say it causes the folks in Niagara Centre a whole lot of concern, and obviously people in significant enough other parts of the province, that they're concerned as well.

2020

What I witnessed today was oh so similar to what happened the other day in the justice committee with Bill 117, this government's so-called domestic violence bill, when opposition members wanted to raise concerns about some real deficiencies in the bill. There, when government members had a chance to say no, when government members had a chance to say to their parliamentary assistant and their minister, "No, this bill shouldn't pass until it has been improved and until it addresses the concerns, legitimate concerns, that were raised by opposition members," none of them said no either. They were content to let themselves be whipped; they were content to simply go with the flow. They weren't interested in asking any of the tough questions; they weren't interested in seeing the matter set down or deferred so real answers could be obtained to those same tough questions. They wanted to please their whip, their parliamentary assistant, perhaps even the Premier. They wanted to prepare themselves for the cabinet shuffle, the one Ms Blizzard writes about in the Toronto Sun, the dramatic cabinet shuffle that she speaks of. The lineup is significant.

I understand why government members do that; I don't understand why opposition members do it. I

understand why government members are competing with each other for scarce cabinet positions; I don't understand why opposition members are prepared to compromise their principles. I understand why government members want to follow and toe the party line and want to play the spin doctors' game; I understand that. I understand that governments wield power and distribute largesse as a result of that control of power on their part. But I don't understand why opposition members aren't prepared to say no.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): You should ask them.

Mr Kormos: Mr Mazzilli, who's as effective a sycophant as this place could contain—

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): That's nasty.

Mr Kormos: Well, he is. He's a parliamentary assistant; he likes the job. He may not be ambitious right now, but in his heart he harbours better things. Mr Mazzilli, one of the most effective sycophants this place has, says, "Ask them." That's exactly what I'm doing. That's why I want to see recorded votes at the end of second reading. That's why I want to compare those recorded votes and contrast them, saying, "If these people were opposed to this legislation such that they're going to vote against it"—and I presume the reason you vote against something is because you want to defeat it. If you don't want to defeat it, why would you vote against it? But if you really wanted to defeat it, why wouldn't you take on some of the task of slowing it down? Why don't you take on some of the task of ensuring that it gets full debate? Why don't you participate in a process that says, "OK, we understand that the bill may well pass"—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. We can't have this yelling back and forth. Please get your paper, your Christmas cards and sign them or something, because if you don't, you're not going to be here long.

Mr Kormos: I can send Mr Palladini a colouring book and some crayons, if that'll keep him occupied for a while.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I think that's what you need.

Mr Kormos: He's got to stay inside the lines. That's part of the rules.

The Acting Speaker: I'll not warn the minister from Vaughan-King-Aurora again.

Mr Kormos: You can't break the crayons, Mr Palladini, and you can't chew on them. I want you to understand that.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: You can have the crayons and the colouring book—

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'm naming the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora.

Mr Palladini was escorted from the chamber.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: I've got to tell you I've got some sympathy for the member you just tossed. But here he is.

Mr Palladini lost his virginity this evening. I think this is the first time he's ever been tossed from the assembly. I've got a feeling there are other places he'd rather be right now in any event, be it here inside the building or in regions beyond this chamber.

I wanted to mention some of the e-mails I got after this afternoon. I got an e-mail from a person who says they can't believe I would vote against the government on the legislation of putting an immediate end to the teachers' strike in Hamilton. You bet your boots. Believe it. To be fair, this is the mother of a five-year-old in grade 1 in Hamilton. She explains, "But our children are the ones who are losing out." She talks about how she's paying for daycare and she has someone who is teaching the children the curriculum at her house. She says undoubtedly what I did has angered more people than herself. "Just please consider our children."

I've got to tell her I do consider her children. Strikes by teachers used to be very rare in this province. I suspect, and I don't have hard data, that more strike votes have been undertaken by teachers in the last five years than had been in the previous 30 years. Teachers have been under assault by this government from the get-go, from day one, from 1995, beginning with the omnibus bill, then when it became clearer and clearer through to Bill 160, and a continuing attack on teachers and on publicly funded education.

Ross school down on Niagara Street in Welland: I was just there again a couple of weeks ago at a little fun fair. Now they're doing three a year to raise money, not for extras, not for class trips, not for junkets to Toronto or Queen's Park. The kids, their teachers and the parents are holding three fundraising events a year to raise money for classroom supplies and basic materials in that school because this government won't fund your kids' education, be it in Hamilton, Welland or any other number of places in the province. That's the kind of climate this government has created for teachers and students. I say to the mother who sent me the e-mail objecting to the position I took, I understand what you're saying, but please, ma'am, understand what this government has been doing to the quality of your kids' education.

I got another one from a woman in Goderich who expressed her thanks for trying to slow down the Tory legislation earlier today. I got another one from a Hamilton parent of a senior kindergarten kid who's mad as all get out that I would vote against the government or do anything to expose what amounted today to the incredible sloppiness of their effort to table this bill for first reading, and then the audacity and arrogance of the government, that wanted it to pass first, second and third reading, no debate. Did you hear Ms Ecker's request for unanimous consent, first, second and third reading all in one legislative day? That's what she wanted. I say to this woman, this mother of the senior kindergarten student, that it's far better, that it's far better, notwithstanding that this legislation is doomed to pass, to ensure that it's

thoroughly debated and that this government's agenda—its real agenda—for your kids is thoroughly exposed.

But then, having gotten that one, I got another one from a teacher in the Waterloo area.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Have you folded, Mr Kormos? You're a human card table.

2030

Mr Kormos: Mr Stockwell says I folded. He's right. I could not sustain my opposition to this alone. Without other opposition members joining in with me, it was but impossible.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: I apologize for having felt compelled—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London-Fanshawe, come to order.

Mr Kormos: —to try to make the best out of what has been a very unpleasant scenario. Yes, Mr Stockwell, I folded.

The Acting Speaker: I'm not warning the member for London-Fanshawe again.

Mr Kormos: I couldn't carry it alone. I appreciate that and I'm not ashamed to acknowledge it. I apologize to the people I've disappointed. I make it very clear that I apologize to those people. I regret the anger of people who wrote by e-mail and telephoned today. I appreciate the similar letters of support of people who would have wanted me to delay this much longer, but the practicalities of it were that I couldn't. I regret that.

But I say this: I may regret even more having folded. At the end of the day I may regret that even more. That means I'll have to take that as a lesson learned, right? I'll have to take that as a lesson learned and reconsider any efforts to compromise on anybody's part down the road. I can live with that. I have no qualms about it. But as I say—Mr Christopherson now gives me the card that says "Time." I don't know whether he's talking about his time or mine.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): You asked for it. You asked me to do it.

Mr Kormos: I asked Mr Christopherson to tug on my coattail, which is what I usually ask colleagues. So I will defer to Mr Christopherson.

I once again want to indicate that I regret not having been able to stand in opposition—

The Acting Speaker: I'm naming the member from London-Fanshawe, Frank Mazzilli.

Mr Mazzilli was escorted from the chamber.

Mr Kormos: Once again, as I close, I want to apologize and indicate that I wished I could have effectively delayed this longer, but I formed the conclusion that I couldn't. I didn't make any friends in the process. As a matter of fact, as I indicated earlier on in my comments, I'm sure I have somewhat fewer friends in the Legislature now than I did earlier today. But that's OK. The fact is that I think I did the right thing. At the end of the day I remain committed to doing the right thing again if I have to and maybe being far more uncompromising in doing the right thing.

I want to thank the people who wrote. I appreciate the praise. I appreciate even more so the letters of anger and anticipate, as some members have already indicated, having received hundreds of these expressions of concern—comments from people in their ridings wanting them to go a particular way on this bill—and appreciate that they probably find that stuff incredibly persuasive. But at the end of the day, what's far more important is to do what's right rather than what one is necessarily persuaded to do by the volume of letters or the intensity of the emotion being expressed in those letters.

I look forward to a recorded vote at 9:30. I want to be able to vote against this legislation and I want others who are opposed to it to be able to vote against it too.

Mr Clark: If there were one word that the parents have been experiencing over the last few weeks in Hamilton-Wentworth, it would be frustration. When they came down here the other day, just a few days back, and sat in the gallery and saw what was going on, they were really frustrated. They were frustrated when they saw the school board lock out the teachers' union because the teachers' union had decided to strike and then decided rotating strikes. They could understand the process, but they were extremely frustrated when they heard both sides stating unequivocally that they were putting the kids first. It's very frustrating to find ourselves in this situation.

About a week and a half ago, the parents started calling and saying, "When is enough enough, and who's going to do something about it?" I had to recognize at that point in time that my constituents were expressing a very, very clear fear that the school year for the students was in jeopardy, that the school year itself was at risk for children from all grades. I also had to wrestle with the fact that we're in a different situation now. There's a new curriculum. The curriculum is a little bit more difficult. So when the ERC came up in the discussion it was kind of unprecedented. We didn't have a decision from the ERC in terms of timing and when the school year was in jeopardy, but we knew, at least I did as one legislator, the parents knew very clearly, that they believed the school year was in jeopardy. So I began lobbying very hard for back-to-work legislation.

I'm glad we're here today and I'm glad that the back-to-work legislation has been introduced. I'm glad the member from Niagara Centre had a change of heart. Based on his debate, I'm not sure whether the change the heart was based on principle or a biological function, that he needed to relieve himself and couldn't stay in here sustaining his opposition, but the reality is he changed his position and it's in complete agreement with the parents now. He's going to oppose back-to-work legislation, I understand that, but he didn't stand in the way of the debate. He didn't stand in the way of the change.

If you actually look at the legislation, and I'm not going to go through it all, quite clearly what the legislation has taken into consideration is the lockout itself. It removes the lockout. It removes the strike threats. It deals specifically with the final vote offer, which is underway

right now by the board. Then it proceeds to deal with arbitration. It even goes so far as to deal with time lost and the impact for the students. So the legislation in itself has been carefully drafted to try to take into consideration all of the concerns.

The interesting thing through this debate was the discussions back and forth about funding. We've heard lots of rhetoric from all sides and we've heard arguments from all sides in terms of whether the school board has the money or the school board doesn't have the money. It was a rare occasion when I found myself in a situation where the local president of the teachers' local was stating very clearly the board has the money to fund a salary increase without the loss of the teaching positions. That was the position of the teachers' union leader. We, from the government side, know very clearly that the money is there. After all, it was this board that did settle an agreement with the secondary panel.

The parents are sitting here and they're watching this. They're seeing it played out in the media. They're seeing two sides entrenched in their positions, not moving. They are seeing the political rhetoric—they called it a political football—while their kids aren't in school. The fear and the anger was at a boiling point. As the other members have alluded to, the amount of mail, e-mail and phone calls that we've been receiving in Hamilton-Wentworth has been significant. For all those people who called earlier today and to whom I gave out the member for Niagara Centre's phone number, I take it back now; he is no longer stopping the legislation from being introduced. So don't call Peter Kormos.

The reality is parents were reaching out, and the thing I found most frustrating was that the parents were stating, "It doesn't matter what the ERC says. It doesn't matter what anyone says in terms of who has to make the decision," that at the end of the day they elect 103 legislators to make the decision, and I found myself in a position where I had no choice but to advocate very strongly for back-to-work legislation to get the kids back in school.

2040

In this legislation, I think it's fair. I think it's equitable. It gets the kids back in school and it allows the labour process to continue, and at the end of the day, if the teachers and the board and the parents and the media and all of the legislators are saying the kids come first, then why would any responsible person oppose this? If you read the bill, there's absolutely no reason why anyone would oppose this back-to-work legislation. It's not a sledgehammer. It resolves the problem very clearly for the residents in my community and puts the kids back in school.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to join this debate and I certainly intend to take a different point of view than my colleague from Stoney Creek as to why we're here and why this situation has occurred.

First of all, let's understand clearly the reason we have the crisis we have in Hamilton and across this province lies squarely at the desk of Mike Harris, Janet Ecker and

the Conservative government. Under Bill 160, this government wanted full control of education. You wanted to be school trustee, teacher, administrator, director and everything else. You wanted education and you wanted to control that out of the Premier's office, so what you did was set up a series of unrealistic, unworkable funding formulas that didn't give the boards the flexibility to negotiate. You made cuts across the board and this is why we have the situation in Hamilton we have today. All you're trying to do by this piece of legislation is limit the damage that you have caused to children in Hamilton as a result of your policies toward public education. It is that simple. It's been a three-week strike that was caused by Mike Harris, the Conservative government and their cuts to education in Hamilton.

I think a lot of people throughout this have dealt with it with great dignity. Tonight, I want to first of all mention Kelly Hayes, the president of the teachers' federation who, under a barrage of attacks and criticism, represented her members well, with class, with dignity, with respect. Kelly's interest, as with every other teacher who was on the picket line that I walked with on Friday and other times, is and always has been the children in the classroom and the best educational experience for those kids.

We have Ray Mulholland, a 24-year trustee who's deeply committed to public education; a trustee who has a great deal of respect who visits the schools regularly, who deals with parents, teachers and kids on a regular basis, who understands the educational system better than anybody in the government caucus. Mr Mulholland could no longer deal with frustration.

We have the parents who had to deal with the difficulty of their kids being out of school; the real fear of the parents that their kids could lose their year, lose that educational experience.

It has been a very difficult and trying time for our community. This government talks about fair and balance in everything it does. I can tell you there's been nothing fair and balanced in how you've handled this. There's the fact that you poisoned the well when it came to the negotiations with the Hamilton board by sabre-rattling and pounding your chest a week ago, 10 days ago, about back-to-work legislation. Think about it. You're in the middle of a dispute, they're trying to come up with some agreement locally, and Janet Ecker rides in on her horse and says, "Hey folks, I'm going to bring you back to work. I'll legislate you back to work."

The member for Stoney Creek was an accomplice in that by asking her. The set-up in the House was wonderful. Did that really help get an agreement any quicker in Hamilton? I say it did not. It just more fundamentally damaged the morale of teachers. It angered teachers. It angered parents.

Once again, this government, with an untimely and wrong intervention, caused more problems than it solved by threatening, a week or 10 days ago, this back-to-work legislation we have today.

The reality is that this government here, Mike Harris, Janet Ecker, since 1995 have stolen \$1,100 from every

single student of the Hamilton board of education, if you look at what they gave in 1995 per student and what they give today. That is the reason we have the problem we have today.

Now we have a recommendation by the Education Relations Commission that the year may be in jeopardy. They make it clear as well that this is the earliest recommendation the ERC has made so far in regard to a ruling of jeopardy for a school year. This government gets the letter, rushes in today with a piece of legislation, and then it's history from there because we have a very difficult situation that has unfolded today.

This problem isn't unique to Hamilton. This is not the last dispute we're going to deal with. Half of Ontario's public high school teachers and a third of the teachers in the elementary system today are still without a contract. Bill 74 has resulted in 75% of our schools facing disruptions in extracurricular activities. There are going to be more students losing extracurricular activities, and there are going to be more lockouts and more lost days across this province.

Clearly this belongs to Mike Harris, Janet Ecker and the Conservative government because of your stubborn approach to education: not listening to teachers, not listening to trustees, not listening to parents, but making those decisions in the Premier's office for the rest of Ontario. I tell you that the debate and this legislation we're dealing with about Hamilton here tonight is going to be repeated across the province time after time in months to come. This is not a fix.

Now you're going to have, as part of this, a binding arbitration process that will result from this at the end of the day. Understand that under Bill 160 you put in an interesting catchphrase that covered not only education but many other public sectors, which is when arbitrators take the board's ability to pay. Who determines the board's ability to pay? Mike Harris, Janet Ecker and the Conservative government of Ontario. You have taken full control of that. You have made the determination of the board's ability to pay. So you've made the determination that's caused this chaos. An arbitrator can't go in and change any of that. Yes, this will get the children back in the classroom, but it doesn't solve the problem you have caused with the basic underfunding of our educational system. It is not going to be changed by that.

You've destroyed the morale of teachers in this province. There hasn't been a government in the history of Ontario of any political stripe that has attacked the teachers with viciousness the way this government has, year after year, ad after ad, commercial after commercial, piece of legislation after piece of legislation. How do you build a better system by destroying the credibility of those who are responsible for delivering that quality education? You have destroyed the morale of teachers across Ontario by your actions, by your attacks. Remember that stupid 24-minute ad you ran on TV that you're proud of, humiliating and embarrassing teachers? Remember your attack ads about teachers?

For years and years they volunteered, gave up family time, gave up their own time to do extracurricular activities, and you had the nerve to dare suggest they weren't doing it and you had to force them to do it. That is this government's approach to public education: destroy the credibility of teachers, destroy the morale of teachers, destroy the system and destroy people's belief in the system.

I don't think it was an accident when a few years back one of your former ministers said the intent was to create a crisis. I can tell you, you have your wish. You have created this crisis. Let me tell you that I believe this crisis has been created because it is a deliberate attempt by this government to undermine and destabilize our public education system so it can then open the door to other alternatives. They can call it what they want across the floor. The reality is that the way to move on and go to things that were unthinkable years ago is to cause enough instability and chaos in the system. They have managed to do that. They have managed to cause this instability in our system.

We know today that in a recent survey 66% of schools reported students must share textbooks and 65% reported out-of-date textbooks. There are now 20,000 students in Ontario who are waiting to be assessed for special education by a board psychologist. Over the past three years the number of schools that have psychologists on staff has dropped 38%. English-as-a-second-language programs are now offered in 24% fewer schools than they were three years ago. That is the reality. One third of the libraries are only open part-time, and now, over three years, the number of libraries staffed by teacher-librarians is down by 15%. This is what the situation is like across Ontario and in Hamilton.

2050

When we look at the inability of the board and the teachers to come to an agreement, who do I believe? Do I believe Janet Ecker as to the reason why, do I believe Mike Harris, or someone like Ray Mulholland with 24 years of dedication? Let me tell you what Mr Mulholland said in a letter to the minister a few days ago as to why we have this standstill. He said, "My frustration is because of the inability of the bargaining process within the limits of the funding formula, which is restrictive. My disappointment is to you, Minister Ecker. I find it difficult to negotiate with one hand tied behind my back." I read that letter from Mr Mulholland into the record last week. That is the reality of why we're facing this situation in Hamilton today.

The reality is that you have continued to spend money on ads attacking teachers rather than putting that money into the classroom. You have spent \$100 million over the last couple of years on your so-called ads that supposedly were to give information. They have been nothing more than partisan political advertising. Try to understand how many teachers you could hire with \$180 million, how many textbooks you could buy, how many computers you could buy, how many librarians you could hire, how many music teachers you could hire with the \$180

million this government has wasted to try to prop up the election fortunes of Mike Harris and the Conservative government.

There's a time and place for that, and that is Tory-fundraised money, and God knows, you have lots of that. It's pretty clear how much of that you have, because your corporate friends have come calling in the last few weeks and you've given them legislation to pay them back for the millions they've raised and given to your party. We know that. Use that money to advertise the Mike Harris Conservative Party of Ontario. Use taxpayers' money back for education—\$180 million could have gone into the classroom. A small portion of that would have solved the problem in Hamilton and would have solved the strike we have in the city of Hamilton.

This government has to come to terms with their partners in our educational system. The partners are not simply the whiz kids in the Premier's office, not simply the Janet Eckers of this world whom the Premier tells what to do when it comes to education or the Chris Stockwells of this world whom the Premier tells what to do when it comes to labour. There are more partners than that. They are the teachers, the parents, the trustees, and we have to deal with those partners. You can't continue to simply impose things from Queen's Park, as you have, and think that's a fix.

Think what you're going to do to Hamilton. By Wednesday morning, or tomorrow night at 6 o'clock, you will have passed the bill that will legislate and force the teachers back into the classroom. You have done nothing to deal with the underfunding. You have hurt morale. Think of the teacher who is going to go back to that classroom Wednesday morning, knowing that three weeks later this government of Ontario has not done one piece of legislation, has not done one iota, has not lifted a finger to help them. They have just tried to beat them up, they have tried to marginalize them and they have tried to demoralize them. So you're going to force teachers back into the classroom without addressing the real issue.

Let this government show its true commitment to education and to ensuring we have quality education by giving us back the money you took from us. It's not that complicated. Bring your legislation in and send a cheque along with the legislation. Send a cheque with the \$1,100 per student that you have ripped out of our educational system since 1995. Then you start dealing with the fundamental problems of what's here. This is easy for you. This is a quick fix. You have the power. You've got a majority on that side of the House. Within a day or two you're going to legislate and use the hammer and force the teachers back to work. You've got the majority power to do that. This is easy.

The right answer, the right thing to do would be too difficult for this government because you would have to then reprioritize where you're spending. Maybe instead of advertising, you'd have to put some of this money back into education.

This is the problem: this government's priorities are all mixed up, and then when they get into a crisis they

blame everyone else. Of course they blamed the teachers here. It's a convenient scapegoat. It depends on what it is. Here you blame teachers. For health care you blame workers, hospitals, ambulance drivers, welfare recipients. The list goes on and on of your victims. Everybody, you blame everybody but yourself. When it comes to health care, it's the federal government. If it's education, it's those bad teachers. On and on the list goes.

I would like once for this government—unless somebody wants to stand up and tell us how perfect they are—to admit that maybe they've made a mistake on any issue, that maybe they're just not handling something right. You've got to come to grips with that in education before you can fix the problem.

This is going to continue to be a problem. You would have thought the government would have learned from its mistakes of the past when it comes to this type of action. You would have thought they would have learned from the damage they've done to education in the city of Hamilton. But no—

The Acting Speaker: The member from Ancaster may want to take his own seat.

Mr Agostino: Actually, I'm enjoying the company here.

If this government is truly committed to getting the system in Hamilton and across Ontario back to stability, to eliminating the crisis and the chaos we have, I would suggest that this government first of all start restoring the cuts you've made. I would suggest you invest more money for textbooks so parents—

Hon Mrs Ecker: We did.

Mr Agostino: The Minister of Education is back in and, in her usual style, heckling.

Instead of working to fix the problem, this government has quick-fix, bumper-sticker solutions to everything, and this is another one of them. I say to this government, if you're serious, if you're committed, put the money back that you've taken out of textbooks, buy more computers for the classroom, make sure we have more librarians than we have right now—the ones you've cut out—and start working toward eliminating the waiting list of 20,000 students who are waiting for psychological assessments across the province. But no, that's too difficult to do.

Again, I go back to what I said at the beginning: we are in this crisis today in Hamilton, and I predict shortly across the province of Ontario in many other communities, because of the funding formula imposed by Mike Harris, Janet Ecker and the Conservative government. That is why we're in this situation today. That is why we have the crisis. That is why they've taken \$1,100 out of education in Hamilton. This piece of legislation that is here today we're going to debate again and again, because you're going to be forced to do this again.

This government, in my view, showed its true colours about the way they deal with this type of situation, these difficulties in negotiations, about a week ago when the minister started talking about back-to-work legislation. Think about it. Within two weeks of a strike without a

ruling from the ERC, which traditionally is what this government has waited for, in the middle of negotiations—difficult, tense negotiations—this government says, “Hey, we’re going to fix it. We’re going to bring in back-to-work legislation.” Janet Ecker waves her fist high in the air and says, “We’re going to fix this. We’ll fix those teachers. We’ll fix the problem. We’re just going to pound them back into submission.”

Laughter.

Mr Agostino: I know the Minister of Labour thinks it’s funny and the member from Stoney Creek thinks it’s funny. I understand that they think beating up teachers is humorous and it’s a sport. It’s like a game for them. I understand that. They see it as a sport.

You take satisfaction in beating up teachers, and you’ve proven time after time that if teachers dared disagree with your government, you made them an enemy. You made them a target. You went after them. You embarrassed them. You humiliated them. You demoralized them. That’s what you’ve done. That’s what this government has done. They’re not a friend of teachers. They’re no friends of education.

Frankly, as I said earlier, their reaction is indicative. When I talked about beating up teachers, they thought it was humorous and they started laughing across the floor. That’s the true agenda here. That’s what the true agenda of this government is: destabilize the education system so we continue—

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: If the Minister of Education would spend more effort talking to parents and teachers and going to classrooms rather than spending her time heckling in the House, we would have a better educational system. But she’s not interested in that. She is part of a group—this cabinet, this minister, this government—who have made an attempt in five years to destroy and destabilize public education, so that they can go to charter, to voucher schools, to the types of schools that your rich friends want across Ontario. We know that. They did it in health care; now they’re doing it in education.

This is the reality. This quick fix isn’t going to do it. With this legislation, students will be back in the classroom, I would venture, by Wednesday morning. But I say to this government, if you’re sincere about fixing the problem, if you’re sincere about quality education, if you’re sincere about restoring some peace in the classroom, then please send a cheque for the money you’ve ripped out. You’ve cut out, you’ve stolen, \$1,100 per student. Send the cheque along with your order in council ordering teachers back to work. Then you have fixed the problem. Otherwise, you’re simply putting a Band-Aid on a very serious problem we have.

2100

Mr Christopherson: It has been an interesting day, to say the least, and probably would be a lot funnier were it not for the seriousness of the issue at hand. We’ll have time to reflect on that.

A lot of different positions were put forward. I find myself in an unusual position of disagreeing with parts of

the position taken by a colleague, and that’s never easy. It’s never helpful to one’s caucus. But I do agree with him when he says—and I don’t know whether he said it directly, but certainly the inference was there—that you’ve got to do what you believe is the right thing to do in the circumstances.

While I’m commenting in the relatively short time I have, I also want to point out where I think my vote in support of this is different than the government’s. If we could just stand back a little bit, up until now, when asked how we feel about this strike, the NDP—I’m the labour critic—has spoken as one voice and said we would not support back-to-work legislation as a result of the lockout. Up until today, the reason for that was that there was no indication that—we did not yet face a situation where the school year was at risk.

My friend across the way—the Tory member from Stoney Creek—has been advocating for some time now, a few days at least, that back-to-work legislation needed to be brought in. I guess the difference is the absence of the ERC. One could ask, what exactly does that do? I spoke with members of the NDP today who were here when I wasn’t, when this was first brought in. Prior to the ERC being in place, we were in exactly the position that the member from Stoney Creek put us in, which was making a political judgment around whether or not it was the time. It was based on one’s politics, one’s philosophy, one’s gut feeling for the situation, but nothing firm. There was really nothing that you could point to objectively.

I am told that our caucus supported the concept of the ERC to remove that political part of these kinds of situations. Our positioning, our thinking at the time apparently was that it staved off right-wing governments from jumping in at the first opportunity on a populist note to order teachers back, because the second teachers go out, you’ve got controversy in your community. Anybody who has faced these sorts of things understands that. This would, hopefully, prevent a right-wing government from using those emotions that flare up during a time of a labour dispute involving teachers and the board, to allow some negotiations to take place. Quite frankly, I would say that those who preceded me—those New Democrats who were here before me in this place—were correct in their thinking. I think Mr Clark’s actions, as the member for Stoney Creek, pointed very directly to what does happen in these kinds of situations when you have a right-wing government in power.

I suspect that if we hadn’t had the ERC, the claims and the call and the clamour for back-to-work legislation would have been coming even sooner. But because we have this ERC, it removes the question of whether or not the school year is in jeopardy from our political instincts to non-political expert opinion.

There has been an argument—I’ve heard it made; I don’t know if it was made in this House or not, but I’ve heard it made—that they don’t believe it. They don’t believe the year is in jeopardy. Well, that may be; it may not be. The point is that if we’ve got a problem with the

process of the ERC and how they go about their deliberations, then let's go and change that. Let's analyze that. Let's put lots of light on it, lots of expertise. If we feel that it has become political in some way or there are certain things they're not calculating or the appointments have led to a tilting of the right on this commission and they're bringing these out sooner than they otherwise would, let's have that debate and discussion and review. Without that happening, in my opinion, we are left with what the ERC is saying.

At the end of the day each of us, even those of us who aren't in government, have to answer for our actions as they relate to kids. We've seen people in this House use that argument where we've said, "You're using it as an excuse, a political football," what have you. Once we've got the ERC coming forward, stating that they believe it is jeopardy—if I have time I will read parts of it into the record because I think it is helpful to have it there—the fact that we now have the commission saying that leaves me and the balance of my NDP colleagues, with one very notable exception, looking at this and saying to ourselves: "What's the most we can do, and what do we achieve with that?" There is the argument that there are principles involved, and there are. Most of the things that are controversial in this place don't happen in the black and white; they happen in the grey.

I honestly do not know with certainty whether or not anyone's school year is in jeopardy, in terms of my own ability to analyze everything and all the factors, and come to a conclusion. I also don't expect that the Minister of Health could perform brain surgery. You rely on the expertise that's available and the process that's put in place. The process has brought us to a point in time where the experts are now saying, "The school year is in jeopardy." Where do you go?

My daughter is not directly affected by this. But if she were, and if she had to lose a school year for any reason, quite frankly, I would be worried sick about her future. "What does it mean?" I'd be angry and I would want a good reason. I'd want to hear a reason, an alternative course of action that was taken that would justify doing that do my daughter's future. Given these circumstances, I don't know what that would be, not that there aren't valid arguments made by my colleague and not that they aren't valid principles. They are.

This is always a subjective matter. I understand that. But in the balance, I can't justify setting aside the ERC recommendation and keeping the kids out any longer. It is already going to be very difficult to catch up on what has been lost. Teachers are going to lose professional days. The children are going to have to work that much harder. They're going to have to take time away from other things. Exactly how will be determined by the school board. We are already at that point.

Did I receive heat from parents across in my community? I see my colleague from Ancaster nodding his head. We've all had those calls. I've had no problem saying publicly and to anyone in Hamilton, "No, back-to-work legislation doesn't solve anything because it wasn't yet

worth that trade-off." This is pretty powerful stuff, taking people's right to withdraw their own labour away from them, even though it is a lockout situation. Nonetheless, I think they're pretty close in this case. That's pretty powerful. Any government ought to walk carefully when they start denying citizens those charter rights.

But unlike my colleague from Stoney Creek, I didn't believe we were at the point where it was worth taking away the teachers' rights—and for that matter the board's rights, but it's the teachers' rights that are directly in front of us here—as a trade-off.

2110

Mr Clark: Five days.

Mr Christopherson: I hear my colleague across the floor say, "Five days." It's more than just five calendar days. It's a document that was tabled here. Certainly your own minister believed it was more than just five days, because while she answered in the House as one would expect, she didn't make a commitment and this government did not move until they got this. They know the history of it. You've all got your notes ready, depending on which way we went.

Our government introduced legislation when the ERC reports were tabled. We didn't actually have to implement it, but we were ready to go. Why? Because it's hard to justify beyond this point. For those who may want to say that maybe my principles are in the wrong place or I'm somehow not a good enough trade unionist, or why is the NDP doing this when it looks like they're backing away from defending people who are out fighting for a decent collective agreement, I would say without question and without blinking at all that I'll stand by my credentials in the labour movement any day of the week and I'll stand by the principles of the NDP any day of the week.

It's easy to say, "The NDP ought to be over there going away off the deep end in unreasonable positions, taking all kinds of stands." I say, "No, we ought not." This is not a debating society. This is about politics, this is about power, and in my opinion the bad guys have all the power right now. I don't think that taking positions that we as members of this caucus aren't all comfortable with is worth making the trade-off that's in front of us today.

Let me also be sure the government hears what I think about the minister of the day saying—and I'm quoting from my notes as she was speaking—that there was time enough for the board and teachers. The minister wants to talk about time. There may or may not have been time enough. What there absolutely was not enough of was money.

My colleague from Hamilton East has introduced into the record the comments of Ray Mulholland. I've known Ray for close to 20 years. When I was an alderman and a regional councillor, we were in the same ward, he as the school board trustee and I as the alderman, and I stand by the integrity and caring Ray Mulholland has for the school system any day of the week. He has been put in an untenable situation.

I'll tell you something else, too. If you want to talk about somebody who has truly represented the interests of the teachers in this case, make no mistake that Kelly Hayes, the president of the local elementary teachers' union, has done a phenomenal job, an outstanding job of speaking out not just on behalf of the students but also ensuring that the parents, through the media, understood why this strike wasn't just about teachers, it was about the school system; it was about our kids. At the last rally we had, last Friday, the first speaker up was a parent, the president of the parents' council at, I believe, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and she spoke in favour and in support of where the teachers were, as did each of us who were there that day.

You see, the game—and it's in Hansard; some of us talked about this in 1995 and 1996 when you started to roll all this out. The game has been so clear. You turn off the tap at this level, and rather than be the one who takes the heat or makes the difficult decisions locally about what has to be cut in order to meet your funding formula, whether it's health care, education, social services or environmental protection, you stand back and let communities, and continue to let communities, tear themselves apart. This is not the fault of the trustees, this is not the fault of the teachers and it's certainly not the fault of the parents. The problem is your funding formula. There's not enough money to do all the things that need to be done and to give teachers a decent collective agreement. At least, that's the position Ray Mulholland has taken, and I want to tell you, having experienced other examples of the same thing, it's not hard to hear the ring of truth there.

We went through this with Henderson hospital. You told us all along the problem was local, and we ended up with our community torn between the members of the board of directors and the nurses, support staff, doctors and the community around Henderson hospital. What happened at the end of the day? Because we fought you, we got money to pay for the outstanding deficit that we said all along was the major problem here.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): You did that?

Mr Christopherson: Yes, I stood with the community saying it was the fault of this government for not funding enough; you're absolutely right.

We went through the same thing with the HSR drivers. We watched regional council—more Hamiltonians—tearing themselves apart over a battle with the HSR drivers. Meanwhile Harris was sitting back on some beach somewhere laughing his rear end off because he got to say, "I'm the tax cutter," and local councillors, aldermen, school board trustees and hospital board trustees had to make the horrible decisions or had to explain to the community why there wasn't enough money to do all these things. That's really what that—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Stoney Creek, come to order.

Mr Christopherson: I know supporting this legislation risks this government's being able to say, "See, it wasn't really about money." That's why I want to take a fair bit of time to point out that it has been about money. It's about lack of money on the part of the provincial government in terms of transfer payments. That's what's really driving all this. I think that's why most parents were really torn about whether they wanted to see back-to-work legislation. They knew their child could only stay out so long before it was a crisis, and we all know how we feel about that as parents. But they also understood that just to order the teachers back, have a poisoned environment in the classroom without any evidence we had reached that tipping point yet, the tipping point of an ERC recommendation that the children's school year is in jeopardy, is what has brought us to this point.

Do you know what? We're going to be here again, because other communities are going to go through what we did in Hamilton, and at the end of the day it's going to be the same problem: not enough money for education. Lots of money for tax cuts—what did you give away? You gave away \$4 billion in corporate tax cuts. This is what we've got going on in Hamilton and soon what we are going to see in other communities across the province.

Yes, I intend to support this legislation based on what has happened here today. But I want to make clear that the reason we have these problems and will have ongoing problems is because the government is not giving enough money for kids' education, period.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I want to make a couple of points and pick up on what the members for Hamilton West and Hamilton East have said regarding their concerns on funding. I want to give the minister credit for trying to say we're going to try to make this fair and equitable. But what we're never told is that it's going to be fair and equitable, and less. Here's the situation that exists in the riding of Brant. Since 1995 there has been a total of 8% less money in our system for both public and separate school boards. That means 8% less money is being given to those children and used in all the different silos the minister is telling us they have the odd opportunity to do.

She also said she made a very strict decision to make sure special education grant money was untouchable and had to go to special education. But she didn't tell the public and the people of Ontario exactly how the ISA grants and the SEPPA grants work. As a principal on leave I had to go through the process before 1999. I spent maybe three quarters of my administrative time trying to put together the package. When the new system came in, I ended up with about seven qualified students who would be able to get the money.

2120

I think what happened across the province, using my example, is that the ministry found out that, "Uh-oh. We have lowered the bar or we've put the bar at such a stage that we have to give more money out to special ed. So what are we going to have to do to reduce that amount of

money that we are going to spend?" How they did that was they raised the bar on the ISA grants. That means that the children had to be extremely difficult to serve in order to get some of that money back. The ISA grants created a very large problem in most boards.

I'll use mine again as another example. The Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk Catholic school board ended up with \$500,000 less this year because of the ISA grant raising of the bar. The minister tries to tell us across the board that everybody got more money, while the public board, the Grand Erie District School Board, received \$1.2 million less because the ISA grant structure was raised to the point where the students who had been getting help were no longer getting help.

Then they said they poured the money in the SEPPA grant. The problem with the SEPPA grant is that it is based on the students it needs to serve. Therefore, even though they say they've put more money in that silo, they weren't getting it applied because there weren't many students to get that help.

They've declined the number of EAs that are available in the system by simply raising the bar of the ISA grant.

The amount of time that was spent by secretaries, by special-ed teachers, by principals, by administrators to put that process to work cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars in administrative time to try to make sure those grant structures were in place. The one board I spoke of had about an 89% approval rating when they still got \$500,000 less in their system to hire EAs to help those children who need special help. That's another example of how less money was put into the system as this minister tries to tell the rest of the people of Ontario that they're getting lots more money.

Let me talk about the changes that this minister has said they have continually put into the system. I want to tell you about a change that has happened in the boards across the province in terms of morale. The idea that there's a battle going on with the boards and with the teachers across the province was explained very clearly by both the members from Hamilton East and Hamilton West. There's an agenda here. There's an agenda of blame. The agenda of blame seems to simply say, "If we can create this little problem that somebody has to take credit for, let's do so." By doing that, they basically say to the parents, "Hey, parents, go blame your school board. Go blame your teachers. It is not our fault."

But they took more money out of the system than they gave. Since 1995, we've got 8% less money in Brant. Since 1995, there's less money overall in the system for the types of things that are necessary to have proper collective agreements. The minister would like to tell us it's got everything to do with living beyond your means: "These guys are living way beyond their means, and we put the brakes on that." How do you put the brakes on that? You don't put any money into the system. You drain the system of the money that's necessary to come up with these appropriate negotiated settlements across the province.

Before 1995, 97% of the contracts were settled without work stoppages—3%. Since 1995, I dare to say—and I agree with the member from Niagara, who indicated this very clearly—we've had an inordinate number of work stoppages. It had nothing to do with the boards. It had nothing to do with the teachers. It had everything to do with the fact that the government continues to zap the system of the money that's necessary to provide the services, particularly to students who are in special-needs circumstances, to make it a level playing field for their educational purposes.

The fact that 8% less money is now in the system in Brant speaks very lowly of the fact that the government is going to start taking credit for putting more money into the system. By facts, since 1995, 8% less money is in the system of Brant county right now.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Understand, about this piece of legislation that's before you today that the Minister of Education introduced for me earlier, this is just standard procedure. Every government has used the same approach when it came to teacher strikes. The Education Relations Committee, at some point during the strike, if agreement can't be reached, suggests that there's jeopardy. When they suggest there's jeopardy, every government before this government moved legislation to order the teachers back to work. It is just that simple.

I understand that some of the comments being made are politically motivated, but let's be very clear that there is nothing unusual about this legislation, regardless of the histrionics from the member for Hamilton East and his attitude about what's going on. The fact of the matter remains that this is no different from any other government.

The question they have opposite is that it has to do with money. Well, what a shock. Money. That's what 99.9% of strikes are all about. They're all about money, Mr Speaker. I say to you, every time they went on strike when the Liberals were in government, it was about money. If you wanted to flow them a whole whack of dough, you could have settled any strike in 15 minutes. That's the simple reality. I know the Minister of Education will say the same and I know the members in the caucus understand. If you want to flow millions of dollars to school boards who happen to be in a situation of a strike or a lockout, you can settle all the strikes all the time. The problem is, if you take that approach, you'll be flowing money at every board during every negotiation because they'll want money to settle the strike. That's how it works.

The difficulty we have is there are terms and conditions set down that we must abide by, and we have. When we were in opposition and jeopardy was declared, the same routine was brought forward. The government would bring a bill—

Mr Agostino: After 16 days.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Look. The members may caterwaul about 16 days. I don't control the education committee, and I know the members opposite know it and your members who were in government then will know it

too. You have no control over the education committee. None whatsoever. They make their decisions by themselves. When they make their decisions, it's completely up to them. It's their discretion. We don't even talk to them. So when they issued the letter today, it came to us without any advance notice. The fact of the matter is they are a commission at arm's length that makes decisions when jeopardy occurs. When and if, and probably never, they ever get into government, they'll understand that. Ask Mr Bradley, and Mr Conway, who was an education minister. He'll tell you. That's the way the system works.

So then you introduce legislation to order them back to work, unanimous consent is granted, one day's debate and they're back to school because they're in jeopardy. Because Mr Kormos had his two-hour hissy fit, we are now in a situation of seeing the students not being allowed to go back to school because he sucked his thumb for two hours and two more days are going to be left out. Two more days are going to be left out and they're going to be left out of school and put in jeopardy to lose their year because he decided to be upset for two hours. That's what it came down to: two hours. So two hours he could sit there saying no and 40,000 kids have the potential to lose their school year. I'm not really certain if you consider that to be an appropriate parliamentary legislative approach, but you can. I don't.

I know when we were in opposition and the ERC came in with jeopardy, we supported back-to-work legislation. We didn't move before the ERC moved; we moved after. The only complaint they could offer was if we moved beforehand. We are cognizant of that fact and we moved after the fact, and we still didn't guarantee the kids their rightful education and the potential not to lose a year because Mr Kormos decided, in his own goodwill,

for two hours he was going to rule Ontario and rain on 40,000 kids' school year.

Well, Mr Kormos, you've done it. Congratulations. You've now cost them two more days. You've cost the parents two more days; you've cost the families two more days. We would have had the bill today through first, second, third, proclaimed and back to school tomorrow. I don't think we're going to get this bill back. Mr Kormos, you were in a government that did the same thing. The only time you found it fit to stand up and be counted for your socialist moral principles is when you sat in a third party without any clout to carry them out. When you sat over here, maybe you should have found the intestinal fortitude to stand up, when you were a government. You cost those kids those days of school. Make no mistake, it's on your hands.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to an order of the House passed earlier this evening, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Agostino: Who are you really for, Chris?

The Acting Speaker: Order. When I am standing, usually I am talking. That means nobody else does.

Mrs Ecker has moved second reading of Bill 145, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.

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. The motion is carried.

It being after 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2130.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
 Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
 Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)		Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Kenora-Rainy River	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener-Waterloo	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London West / -Ouest	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Markham	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premiers et derniers numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

CONTENTS

Monday 20 November 2000

FIRST READINGS

Back to School Act (Hamilton District School Board), 2000,	
<i>Bill 145, Mr Stockwell</i>	
Mrs Ecker	5597
Agreed to.....	5597

SECOND READINGS

Continued Protection for Property Taxpayers Act, 2000,	
<i>Bill 140, Mr Eves</i>	
Mr Young	5593
Debate adjourned	5596
Back to School Act (Hamilton District School Board), 2000,	
<i>Bill 145, Mr Stockwell</i>	
Mrs Ecker	5597
Mr McMeekin	5601
Mr Kormos	5604
Mr Agostino	5608
Mr Christopherson	5611
Mr Levac	5613
Mr Stockwell.....	5614
Agreed to.....	5615

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Lundi 20 novembre 2000

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 2000 sur le retour à l'école (Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board), projet de loi 145,	
<i>M. Stockwell</i>	
Adoptée	5597

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2000 poursuivant les mesures de protection des contribuables fonciers, projet de loi 140, <i>M. Eves</i>	
Débat ajourné	5596
Loi de 2000 sur le retour à l'école (Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board), projet de loi 145,	
<i>M. Stockwell</i>	
Adoptée	5615