



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 37th Parliament

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

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 19 June 2001

Mardi 19 juin 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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The House met at 1845.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I want to give everyone a warm welcome this evening.

Orders of the day.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): Thank you for your warm welcome, Mr Speaker. I'd like to call order G80.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STABILITY AND EXCELLENCE
IN EDUCATION ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 SUR LA STABILITÉ
ET L'EXCELLENCE EN ÉDUCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 18, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 80, An Act to promote a stable learning environment and support teacher excellence / Projet de loi 80, Loi favorisant la stabilité du milieu de l'enseignement et soutenant l'excellence des enseignants.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: A quorum call, please.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check and see if there's a quorum present.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Thank you, Speaker, and—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm just wondering if it's a point of order to point out that there is only one NDP and no Liberals in the House at this time.

The Acting Speaker: No, it's not.

The Chair recognizes the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I just want to point out to the members opposite that it's the duty of the government members, by virtue of being the government, to keep a quorum in the Legislature. If they are not able to keep a quorum, then that is a reflection on the government and their seeming lack of interest in the affairs of the Legislature.

I want to resume where I left off yesterday in terms of this debate. Just so that everyone is aware of what I was saying, I pointed out that whenever this government gets into trouble on a particular issue, they look for some way of vilifying someone or putting together an attack or offensive against someone.

We know this government is in trouble with respect to their scheme to use taxpayers' dollars to fund private schools. We know the public clearly understands now that the money which will be given to private schools will come out of the budgets of public schools. We also know that the private schools that will be funded will not be subject to and will not have to meet any of the requirements our public school system has to meet. They will not have to use certified teachers. Their teachers will not have to pass certification and recertification criteria. We know these private schools will not have to comply with the Ontario Human Rights Code. In surveys we've done of a number of the private schools, by their admissions criteria they in effect close their door to disabled children, children of special needs and children who are developmentally handicapped. In fact, there is broad discrimination and we know that the majority of people in Ontario are absolutely opposed to public funds being used to fund and finance this kind of systemic discrimination.

1850

The more people become aware of this, for example, when people become aware that as these tax credits entice children out of the public system and into the private schools, the government will then cut public school funding accordingly, people become quite concerned.

So the government has found it necessary to try to create a diversion, to create some other educational issue that will divert attention away from their scheme to use public money to fund private schools, to divert attention away from their tax credits for private schools, to divert attention away from their vouchers for private schools. That's why the government introduced this legislation.

What this legislation does, or what it's intended to do, is to start a fight with the support workers in our schools, those people who ensure that our public schools are clean and well taken care of, that they are safe for the children, that they meet health and safety standards. There are the school clerks and school secretaries who phone parents each morning when a child is late or is not in attendance to make sure the child is at home and is not somehow lost between home and school. This legislation is intended to start a battle with this school support staff.

In addition, some of the other elements of this legislation are intended to start another battle with teachers. The government knew when they brought in some of the measures in this legislation that they would offend the vast majority of teachers across the province, and I say to you the government intended that. By beginning that kind of strife, they can then deflect attention away from their disastrous plan to use public money to fund private schools.

So that's where we are. That's why the government brought in this legislation. What I'd like to do is use the time remaining to me to actually go through some of the measures of this legislation that are so badly thought out.

For example, the government in this legislation has introduced measures to recertify and test teachers. In doing so, even the college of education, the very body, the very organization that does the lion's share of work in terms of teacher certification and teacher professional development, has said that what the government has introduced lacks credibility, is not implementable, is probably legally open to challenge and is not financially sustainable. In other words, the government has brought in a strategy—a scheme; I wouldn't flatter it by calling it a strategy—that even the college of education says can't be implemented, that there is no money to implement it with, that lacks credibility in the education community and lacks credibility, most of all, among academics and, finally, could be challenged legally.

Why would a government introduce something that is so ill thought out and obviously so inadequate? I say to you that the reason they brought it in is not to make a positive addition to education in the province, but rather to start a battle with teachers and with the college of education, and then to use that battle to deflect or otherwise try to get the issue of public money, taxpayers' money, being used to fund private schools off the front pages and out of the headline news stories.

Just for a minute let me deal with the issue of teacher testing. The teacher testing part is in many ways an insult to teachers. The college of education has been out there, they've consulted with teachers, they've consulted with boards of education, they've consulted with academic institutes. The College of Teachers actually put together a strategy for teacher certification, teacher recertification and further teacher professional development that had the support of teachers. By completely ignoring this good work that the college of education has done, which teachers have participated in, which academics at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and academics at the various faculties of education have participated in, by completely disregarding that and instead bringing in their own inadequate scheme, this government has once again insulted the teachers of Ontario, has once again insulted the broad education community in the province.

I say again, this hasn't happened by accident; it's happened deliberately. The government is desperate to drive that issue of taxpayers' money being used to fund private schools off the front page, so it will make a collective insult to the education community of the province to do

that. But at the end of the day this will not be good for classrooms, it will not be good for our students and it will not be good for the education system as a whole. Creating more strife in our schools, creating more strife in the classroom, picking another battle, insulting teachers one more time is not good for the education of our children, is not good for our schools as a whole, yet that's what the government has chosen to do.

I want to deal with one of the other elements in this, and that is the government's desire, as they say, to create labour stability in the schools. What they are proposing to do is this: they're proposing that should this legislation pass, all boards of education would be required in any collective agreements they sign henceforth to ensure that it is a three-year collective agreement.

What's the government up to here? As we know, there's likely going to be an election over the next two years and so the government wants to find a way to silence the teachers, to silence the education support workers and essentially ensure that in the government's lead-up to the next election there will not be any labour disputes, any lockouts, any strikes, not in the interest of education but in the interest of trying to give this government smooth sailing into the next election. That in itself suggests how much the government's motivation is political, not educational.

When you look beneath the veneer, this situation becomes even worse. The boards of education are not opposed to signing three-year collective agreements with their teachers and their education support workers. The teachers and the education support workers are not opposed to three-year collective agreements. But what the boards want, what the teachers want, what the education workers want and what parents want is to know what the funding will be over the next three years. If they're going to sign collective agreements that extend three years, they want to know, quite reasonably, what will be the funding: what will be the educational funding for year one; what will be the educational funding for year two; what will be the educational funding for year three?

1900

One would think that in a rational world a government that says, "We want three-year collective agreements," would then produce three years of funding. In other words, they would say, "This will be the funding in year one. This will be the funding in year two. This will be the funding in year three," so that rational planning can be done, so that the board will know how much money it will have to invest in school operations and in the recruitment and retention of teachers; how much money it will have, for example, for salaries; how much money it will have for special education; how much money it will have for busing etc. These are all big issues that need to be dealt with.

Just on the issue of, "How do we pay for our heating bill?" we have seen incredible increases in the cost of natural gas over the last few months. We know that the government has increased hydroelectricity rates. We know that there are more hydroelectricity rate increases

on the horizon. If the government wants boards of education and education workers to negotiate three-year collective agreements, one would rationally expect that the government would come forward and say, "This is what you'll have in all of these budget categories for the next three years so you can plan, so you can allocate the funding, and you can then sign these collective agreements." In a rational world, that's what one would expect. But alas, the government is not prepared to do that, so I gather that boards of education and teachers and education workers are supposed to sign collective agreements completely in the dark, without knowing what funding will be available.

I just want to contrast what the government is saying there with the proposal in the legislation the government has brought forward with respect to its own pay raises for MPPs. When it comes to their own pay raises, is the government prepared to countenance any uncertainty, any insecurity? Are they prepared to say that the pay increase will be subject to a certain level of funding and the funding being allocated by the Legislature? No, not at all. When it comes to their own pay, what the government is prescribing is that as soon as the so-called independent commissioner makes a recommendation and signs his name, it automatically takes effect. It automatically takes effect and there is no appeal; there is no discretion. They money must ipso facto be allocated. What a contrast—

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: I think I've hit a nerve with the government benches. I think I have succeeded once again in waking up those government members. I think I've got their attention again, Speaker, and I want to thank you for your indulgence in allowing me to awaken them from their slumber and to get their attention once again. As soon as you mention their own salaries, isn't it interesting how they come awake? They come immediately awake, and so, Speaker, I want to thank you for allowing me to point out that incredible contradiction: that education workers, teachers and boards of education are supposed to sign three-year collective agreements without knowing any of the allocation of funding, but when it comes to their own salaries, these government members want absolute certainty. The whole thing takes effect as soon as the commissioner signs his or her name. I think it tells you where the priorities are. Right? Education ranks down there when it comes to comparing it with their own salaries.

Signing a collective agreement when you have no idea what the funding is for the board of education, for the school board, I would say is operating in Theatre of the Absurd. Not knowing what funding you're going to receive, but knowing, because virtually every energy expert in North America will tell you this, that natural gas prices and heating oil prices are going to increase, knowing that electricity prices are going to increase—even the Minister of Energy admits that now. The Minister of Energy, who was saying to people that as a result of this government's strategy of selling off our hydroelectricity system, power rates would go down,

now says that's false, that's not true, that the cost of electricity is going to go up. If I may say, the last two jurisdictions to sell off their electricity systems were California and Alberta and they have seen a doubling, a tripling, a quadrupling of their electricity prices. Why would a board of education sign a collective agreement not knowing what their funding level is but knowing that the cost of heating oil, the cost of natural gas, the cost of electricity by all predictions are going to go through the roof? Why would they do that? Why not just put a gun to their heads? It has the same result.

Why would a board of education sign such a collective agreement when they know, for example, that everyone who is looking at the price of gasoline is saying the price of gas is going to go up? The international oil and energy companies are socking away the money and are so happy to force the price up, which means the cost of busing, which is substantial in rural Ontario—and I know you would understand that, Speaker, because of your constituency, which is much like mine. It's not unusual in my constituency to see children being bused 90 minutes, an hour and a half, 100 kilometres, to go to school in the morning and then 100 kilometres back in the evening. That's not unusual. When you look at the price of gasoline and what that's going to do to the cost of busing, why would a school board sign a collective agreement when it has no control over that variable—none whatsoever?

Then we have juxtaposed beside this—I'm glad I had a chance to question the Minister of Education today; it was quite enlightening. The minister admitted in estimates that in fact the government has no formula to cover off just general inflation. In other words, if since 1995 you've had a 15% inflation factor for Ontario—and that is the case; Statistics Canada will tell you that since 1995 the consumer price index for Ontario has risen by 15%. So to buy what would have cost you \$100 in 1995, you now need \$115. That's the inflation factor. The Minister of Education admitted that in its funding formula this government doesn't even keep track of inflation and doesn't fund so as to deal with inflation.

Well, if the government funding formula isn't even prepared to deal with just general inflation, why would a board of education sign a collective agreement when, if there's an inflation factor of, say, 2.5% or 3% a year over the next three years, they would be out by 9% or 10% three years from now? In other words, just in inflation alone they would have 10% less money than they need. No board of education would do that, no rational person would do that, yet this government is going to require, going to order, boards of education to do that.

There's an even greater element of uncertainty to this. Again, I was glad to be able to question the Minister of Education, because she admitted I was essentially right. I asked the minister, "Do you keep track of enrolment? Do you forecast enrolment increases?" She said, "Yes." I then said, "Well, now that you're offering this voucher, this tax credit for private schools, have you done any forecasting as to how many parents, upper-income parents, might be enticed, as a result of that tax credit to

take their children out of public schools and put them in private schools?" Do you know what is remarkable? The Minister of Education admitted that before the government introduced their enticement for private schools, they did no such study and that since then they have done no such study.

1910

So they don't know what the impact of private school enticements, private school vouchers, will be on the enrolment in the public school system and therefore the funding for the public school system. They don't know that and yet they want boards of education—not want, they're going to command boards of education to sign a three-year agreement.

I just want to illustrate for people at home the conundrum that this will put the public schools in. Fortunately for us, some think-tanks, some independent research groups, have been out there and have actually done some research on how many upper-income parents would use the private school tax credits, the private school vouchers, to send their children to private school.

Lang Research, a very reputable research organization here in Ontario, has done a lot of opinion research and a lot of quantum analysis. They did a representative survey of Ontario and they sent questionnaires to literally hundreds of parents. What they found in their representative survey is that 15% of parents in this province who now send their children to public school would seriously consider sending their children, with the introduction of these private school tax credits, these private school vouchers, whatever the government wants to call them to private schools.

Now 15% of students in Ontario works out to 330,000 students. If 330,000 students left the public system and went to the private school system—you can talk to any director of education in the province, and they will tell you what that means for education funding. They will tell you that education funding under this government's funding formula works generally on a per-student basis.

One of the boards of education in my constituency lost 200 students two years ago. When they lost 200 students, they lost \$1.4 million out of their funding formula. How do you get to \$1.4 million? The director of education will tell you this straight up. You take the 200 students and you multiply by \$7,000 per student, and that works out to \$1.4 million. Depending on the unique circumstance of your board, it could be \$6,900 per student, maybe \$6,800 per student, maybe \$7,100 per student, but roughly \$7,000 per student. He said, "We lost 200 students. Then they took 200 times \$7,000—\$1.4 million—out of our budget."

Another board of education in my constituency lost 700 students. The director said, "I can tell you right up how much money we lost. You take the 700 and in our case, because our funding is a little less, you multiply by \$6,800 per student, because of our unique circumstances, and we lost \$4.6 million."

If 15% of the students in the province leave the public school system—that's 330,000 times \$7,000 per student—it works out to \$2.3 billion going out of the public

school system. If only 10% leave, if only 5% leave as a result of this private school enticement, it means that boards of education would be absolutely nuts in the head to sign three-year collective agreements and face the prospect that they're going to lose \$2 billion of their funding, \$1 billion of their funding, even \$500 million of their funding as a result of students leaving their public school system.

Yet that's what's this government is commanding—not asking, not diplomatically requesting—that boards of education must do: they must sign a three-year collective agreement, not knowing how any of this is going to be dealt with in the funding formula.

Do you know what is even more incredible? This is a government that, if you read their throne speech and their budget, uses the word "accountability" at least four times on every page. Where is the accountability of a government that knows that natural gas prices are going up, that knows heating oil prices are going up, that knows that hydroelectricity prices are going up, that knows that the costs of busing are going up, that knows that its private school vouchers—its private school tax credits—are going to have an enticement effect in terms of enticing students out of the public system, it is going to create all kinds of uncertainty in terms of funding and a government that knows that it doesn't fund to cover inflation? With all that uncertainty, it's going to command boards of education to sign three-year collective agreements.

You tell me, where is the accountability in that? I think any rational person, any reasonable person out there, no matter of what political persuasion, would say that that is absolutely bereft of accountability; it is the antithesis of accountability. If anything, it is truly a venture into Theatre of the Absurd. Yet that's what this government is commanding for our schools and for the funding of our schools.

I just want to talk a bit about the other side of the equation. From one of my past vocations, as a teacher, having actually sat in on negotiation sessions, bargaining sessions, I can tell you that no responsible teacher federation representative could ever go back to the teachers in his or her school, in his or her board of education, and recommend that those teachers sign a collective agreement—any kind of collective agreement—in view of this incredible uncertainty.

No responsible person would; no accountable person would. Frankly, any negotiator for the board of education could not go to the negotiation table with any credibility whatsoever. Such a person who tried to do that with any kind of credibility would be the laughingstock of everybody at the table. Anybody out there who deals with wage and salary matters or who has to set budgets or deal with budgets would laugh at that kind of prospect. It is truly unbelievable, but that is what this government is not just proposing in this legislation; that is what they're commanding in this legislation. People across Ontario need to know about that.

What effect will this have on morale? What effect will this have on the morale of teachers? What effect will it

have on the morale of educational administrators? What effect will it have on the morale of education workers, broadly defined? I don't think you have to be a wizard, I don't think you have to be some kind of wisenheimer to understand that this would lead to an unbelievably frustrating situation, that it is so disrespectful, that it is such a shameful prospect, that it could not have any other effect than to be extremely corrosive of morale. Yet this is what the government—not proposing—is going to command boards of education to do.

There is another part of this legislation, and what is really incredible is that the government has the gall to call this a provision regarding labour stability, the gall to say that something which increases and instills insecurity everywhere will lead to labour stability. If George Orwell were alive today, he would indeed get more than a few chuckles out of this government's usage of the English language, or should I say misuse of the English language. You know Mr Orwell, who spoke about doublespeak and so on. As I say, Mr Orwell would indeed have quite a chuckle at this government's use of the English language.

1920

The other element of this legislation which is, I would suggest to you, going to create not labour stability but much frustration is the provision which will in essence, knowing this government and how it operates, take away the right to strike from educational support workers, because that also was involved. I have to say again, when you have so many provisions which by their very nature and the surrounding context are going to introduce so much uncertainty into our schools and into school relations, are going to create so much conflict and confrontation, the only thing you conclude is that this is a government that desires that conflict and confrontation in the schools; this is a government that is looking for ways to keep conflict and confrontation going in the schools; this is a government that does not want our schools to go quietly about their work; this is a government that wants that conflict so that it will force the issue of public funding for private schools off the front pages and off the lead story of the newscasts.

Finally, in the time remaining to me, I want to deal with the government's approach to extracurricular activities, because with great fanfare a few short weeks ago the Minister of Education announced that the government had created the conditions whereby extracurricular activities would be restored to our high schools across the province. Sure as shooting, the government got the headline the next day, saying, "Extracurricular Activities to be Restored."

When you read the fine print of this bill, you suddenly discover that it's not true, that in fact the so-called compromise, the so-called meeting of the minds that the government boasted about a few weeks ago, didn't happen, it was quite unreal. So this government is going to once again use the hammer of legislation to force people—in this case, they're going to force the boards of education, and I just want people to understand clearly what they're going to do. What they're going to do is

this: the amendments in this legislation say that it is the legal duty now of each board of education to have extracurricular activities in their high schools. So the problem suddenly is foisted on to the boards of education. The boards of education are now the bad guys. After this government screwed up extracurricular activities virtually across the province—they took what was a local problem in Durham region and inflicted it on the rest of the province—they're now going to say, "Ah, but over to you, board of education. You have to fix this, and if you can't fix it, you're the bad guy."

Under the terms of the legislation, how is the board of education going to fix this? This is really interesting. As we know, this government has legislated a much lengthier teaching schedule for teachers than has ever existed before. It means that each teacher is teaching more hours each day and teaching more students. The teachers are saying, "Look, if I have all of this prep work to do, all of this teaching to do, and then all of the marking and follow-up work to do, I'm sorry, I will not have as much time for extracurricular activities." The government's answer? "It's now the responsibility of the board of education." In order to get some teachers to coach and to take over the band and drama and the chess club and to chaperone student dances and activities, the board of education must lighten the load of those teachers who are prepared to take on these extracurricular activities. But the only way they can lighten the load of those teachers is to increase the class sizes of other teachers.

So the government strategy, after creating this strife, this conflict, is now to say, "You, boards of education, you're the bad guys. You're at fault. You're to blame," and on top of that, then set parameters on what the boards of education can do to try to fix the problem. The only way they can fix the problem this government created is by increasing the class size at the secondary school classroom level. This is not going to provide education stability; it's going to create more frustration.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The Chair recognizes the member for Simcoe North.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to be here this evening. It's a pleasure to listen to the Leader of the Opposition. I guess the sky is falling, in your opinion, again. I can't believe the fearmongering and the scare tactics and the negative feeling toward everything that occurs in the field of education.

Let's talk about funding. In 1995, total school board revenue was \$12.9 billion. For the coming school year, that revenue is projected to be \$13.8 billion. That is an increase, over last year, of 2.8%.

You talked a little bit earlier about the school boards that won't sign agreements. There are school boards today that have signed multi-year agreements. There are 44 school boards in the province of Ontario right now that have two-year agreements. There are two others that have three-year agreements. You make it sound as if every agreement in the province, any kind of a collective agreement whatsoever, has to have the money upfront

showing in the budget. I'm disappointed that you don't have any faith at all not only in the government but in the school boards to make decisions.

This year, in 2000-01, we will invest \$1.37 billion in special education.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): It's not enough.

Mr Dunlop: No, it's never enough. When you're a taxaholic, when you're a tax addict like you people—

Mr Christopherson: You tell that to the parents of kids who can't get to school.

Mr Dunlop: It's a 17% increase since 1998-99.

Mr Christopherson: You tell that to the parents of disabled children in Hamilton.

The Acting Speaker: Order. It's a hot night, but I would like at this time to warn everybody that I don't think that's any excuse for unparliamentary behaviour. I would ask you to keep that in mind.

Comments and questions? The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North.

Applause.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Thank you very much for your kind applause. It's hard to imagine that the government members and the government itself can't take our concerns seriously about the facts, and certainly the fact of the three-year contracts being forced upon the school boards and unions to try to settle, when indeed unless you do have some kind of idea about what kind of funding you're going to be receiving, this process is one that is fraught with absolute peril. We know about increased costs for heating. We know about increased transportation costs.

I certainly agree with a great deal of what the member for Kenora-Rainy River said. He made the point that he thinks one of the reasons why this is being done the way it is, which is to have all the contracts up to 2004 in place, is so they can avoid controversy at election time. I guess I have a slightly different angle on it, which is that I think indeed this may be a move by the government to try to force more confrontation.

We know that the contracts of 58% of the school boards—I think 71 of them—are ending this year and will be put in a position where the negotiations are going to be literally very difficult, to reach any kind of fair bargaining if you're going to have a situation where the school boards don't have any idea of what funding they can promise. Obviously the unions representing the teachers and other support staff are going to have some difficulty simply accepting that they can't have any increases at all. To me, it's a set-up, in essence, to actually cause confrontation, cause another crisis perhaps in the education sector, and one which leads us to believe that this is exactly what the Premier wants and exactly what this bill is moving toward.

1930

They talk about stability in education. I think this bill is one that actually is geared toward causing instability in education, because what will ultimately happen is that there will be some real problems in reaching negotia-

tions. How can you possibly negotiate a three-year agreement if you do not have some idea of what your funding ability will be in the years ahead? I have real concerns about it. I wish I had more time to express them. I think they are legitimate concerns and should be taken seriously by the government.

Applause.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Thank you, Minister of Community and Social Services, for that warm applause.

I want to say one thing on this particular debate that was raised by my leader. It's something that I and a lot of other parents feel for kids who are in the education system. My youngest one is in grade 13 and is off to university this upcoming year. But there are a lot of parents out there in our communities who are feeling that a lot of the things the provincial government has done vis-à-vis education over the last six years have really been an attack on teachers and wanting to pick a fight with them.

Yet again we see in this legislation a continuing of that particular agenda. In the end, I don't think it serves us in the long run in creating a better system of education. I believe that all it does is create a fight that doesn't need to be there and creates a feeling on the part of teachers that somehow the work they do isn't valued. I don't think that's a message we should be sending as legislators. They do important work in our society. They are entrusted with the care of our kids. They are entrusted to give them the best education possible so they can go out and compete with the other kids in the world on a level playing field, as people would say.

For people on the government side to continually bring in legislation like this that I and a lot of other parents view as an attack on teachers, I don't think serves us well. I understand why the government does it. It's a quick hit. It's another opportunity to have a press release that shows that this government is being tough on teachers when teachers are perceived by some—I wouldn't say all—to be a group of people who are favoured in our society.

I say to those people who believe that, go spend a day in a grade 8 class or a grade 11 or grade 12 class somewhere. Find out if it's exactly what you would want to be doing, because it takes a lot of skill, it takes a lot of talent, I would argue, and it takes a fair amount of education and patience to work with those kids and give them the kind of education they need. I don't believe that these types of attacks are leading to better education in Ontario.

Mr Wettlaufer: Once again, the member for Kenora-Rainy River, the leader of the third party, has demonstrated why they only have nine seats over there. They've lost total touch with the Ontario electorate.

Parents want to be assured that the teachers who are teaching their children in schools have the knowledge, the skills and the commitment to keep their children achieving the highest standards.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Do we have a quorum?

The Acting Speaker: Would you like me to ask?

Mrs Bountrogianni: Yes, please.

The Acting Speaker: Would you check and see if there's a quorum present.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kitchener Centre has a minute and a half.

Mr Wettlaufer: Once again, Speaker, the opposition parties have demonstrated that they don't care about the affairs of what goes on in this House. There are only two NDP members and one Liberal here.

What I was saying before is that there are many people in Ontario who recognize what we are doing and that it's not all that bad. The NDP and the Liberals claim it's that bad; well, it's not. It's good. It's good for the students.

Listen to this: "The government, to their credit, has had the nerve to make the first move and has put some building blocks to a compromise on the table." Who said that? Liz Sandals, the president of the Ontario Public School Boards Association. That was reported in the *Globe and Mail* on May 8, 2001.

Listen to this. He says, "What we're trying to say is we are prepared to compromise on the amount of time that is involved in the classroom as long as the government is prepared to compromise on the extra class." Well, we've compromised. That quote was from Earl Manners. We're waiting for him to compromise. That was reported in the *Toronto Star* on December 22, 2000. I know. You aren't in bed with Earl Manners like the Liberals are. I appreciate that. Nevertheless, you should still listen to what he says.

We have provided increased flexibility. We have provided what the Ontario electorate wants. The Ontario electorate is looking for teachers who are qualified, who are committed, who are professional. Most of them, 99% of them, are that. We want the extra to be.

The Acting Speaker: The leader from Kenora-Rainy River has two minutes to respond.

Mr Hampton: I want to thank the members for paying such close attention to what I was saying, and I want them to know I was paying close attention to what they were saying.

First of all, I would urge the member for Kitchener Centre, if you're going to use quotes, to please use up-to-date quotes. The quotes you are using are out of date. In fact, the very elements of this legislation speak against the comments you quoted. So please, I've got no problem with your using quotes, but use quotes that aren't out of date.

To the member for Simcoe North, I can tell you that from the discussions I've had, the two or three boards of education out there that have signed three-year collective agreements are very worried now, because they see the uncertainty that the public funds for private school tax credits have created in terms of potentially declining enrolment. They know now, because the numbers are out there, that your government is not willing to fund for

inflation, that you are not funding for enrolment growth, that you're not funding for any of those things, that your response to the increases in the costs of heating oil, electricity and natural gas for this year alone were inadequate. So they are already second-guessing themselves and saying, "Why did we sign a three-year agreement when we have absolutely no security that the funding is going to be there? Our experience of this year is that the funding is not going to be there."

With respect to special education, what your government does whenever it cites special-education funding is that you neglect to take into account the money the local boards used to put into special education when they had property-taxing power to top up the provincial funding. In fact, you've cut funding for special—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I am pleased to speak this evening on Bill 80, An Act to promote a stable learning environment and support teacher excellence, 2001.

I will begin by speaking about teacher testing. Today, educating our children is a much greater challenge than it used to be. Building a system that ensures our children's success means preparing them for a world that is continually changing and will be even more technologically driven and competitive than today's.

All parents want to see their children succeed. I think of my own four children, who are all in the public education system: my daughter Abigale, who is in grade 13, in her OAC year, and is just writing her final exams, preparing for post-secondary education; my other daughter, Renée, who is in grade 10, in the double cohort year, which makes me very interested in the double cohort year; my son Stuart, who is in grade 8 and will be graduating next Monday from grade 8, and I hope the whip allows me to leave this place so I can be at the graduation; and my son Winston, who is in grade 6. I hope I'm able to make it to Abigale's graduation on Tuesday if the whip allows me.

They are all in French immersion. They have all had an excellent education in Bracebridge to this point, and they've been lucky that they haven't been affected by removal of co-instructional support. They've had great teachers and an excellent education.

Most of us would agree that the quality of their child's teacher can affect how well their child performs. They want their children taught by teachers they know are well trained, knowledgeable and committed to continuous improvement, teachers they know will prepare their kids to compete and win in the world of today and tomorrow. Over the past six years, our government has been putting into place the building blocks for an education system that will effectively meet these challenges. The key part of that system is quality teaching.

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Parents know that excellent teachers foster a passion for learning that students carry with them throughout their lives. We've all had those excellent teachers. They

can also inspire their students to achieve things they never thought possible. I think of my daughter Abigale's science teacher, who suggested she apply for the Toronto Science Centre last fall and take a semester at that very special school. She applied and was accepted and had an exceptional semester doing OAC subjects at the Toronto Science Centre, which is a fantastic school.

Without the confidence that all teachers in our public schools are committed to excellence and continuous learning, we will not be able to fully achieve our goal of providing all students with an education of the highest quality. That is why our government last year introduced our comprehensive Ontario teacher testing program. The program builds on the support and systems already in place to ensure that both new and experienced teachers have the up-to-date training, knowledge and skills to help students succeed and achieve the highest standards.

The demand for quality assurance today exists in every job. Meeting public expectations for quality and excellence is not a challenge faced by teachers alone but also by members of many other professions. As a pilot, I know that if you're an instrument pilot, you take an annual or biannual flight test, depending on which rating you have. I think we'd all agree that we want someone flying on instruments to be able to meet those standards, especially if they're the pilot and you're the passenger.

In my past business running a resort, I faced many tests, whether it was being inspected by the health inspector, whether it was being inspected by the fire marshal or whether it was being inspected by the building inspector. All these inspections were meant to assure that our business met certain standards.

Teachers in other countries and provinces are also required to update their skills and knowledge. For example, in Nova Scotia teachers must complete at least 100 hours of professional development every five years. Many US states have entry requirements for new teachers and mandatory professional development requirements within specific time frames for practising teachers. Many professional associations and regulatory bodies in Ontario, such as the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario and the Ontario Association of Architects, require their members to complete a mandatory program of professional development over a specified time period. It only makes sense that we do recurrent training to stay up-to-date on things.

Modelled on the best practices in other professions and other jurisdictions, our program includes a series of initiatives which are being phased in over two years. Already in place is a language proficiency test, in effect since last fall, for new applicants to the teaching profession who took their teacher training outside of Ontario in a language other than English or French.

To be introduced over the coming months, pending approval of this legislation, where necessary, are a requirement that, starting next spring, all new applicants for Ontario teaching certificates take a qualifying test similar to a lawyer's bar exam, and new province-wide performance appraisal standards to ensure all teachers are

evaluated regularly and consistently in their classrooms. I think this makes sense, to make sure they're effectively communicating the important knowledge they are trying to communicate.

I think it is important that the ministry is also developing an internship program for new teachers to help them acquire strong teaching and classroom management skills. We will also be introducing a system to recognize teaching excellence, and it will establish a role for parents, educators and experts in a quality assurance process for schools.

In developing this comprehensive plan, the government is consulting with parents, students, teachers, principals, vice-principals, trustees, deans of education, the Ontario College of Teachers, as well as other education partners. Experiences in other professions and jurisdictions have been a key part in designing and developing this process.

Bill 80 would require all members of the Ontario College of Teachers to complete five-year cycles of professional development to stay up to date and to maintain their certification. I think this makes sense. Mandatory recertification was a key election promise our government made in 1999 and was recommended by the Royal Commission on Learning in its 1995 report.

Bill 80 would amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act to give the college clear statutory authority to implement and enforce mandatory professional learning requirements. In addition, the bill would confirm mandatory professional learning as one of the objectives of the college, determine the overall requirements for mandatory recertification, establish a statutory committee of the college to approve courses and providers, outline notice, appeal, suspension and cancellation provisions for teachers who do not complete the professional learning requirements—

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm not sure that a quorum is present. Would you be good enough to check, please?

The Acting Speaker: Would you check and see if a quorum is present?

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka.

Mr Miller: Thank you. It's a little warm, I had to take my jacket off. I think it was the previous speaker. There was a fair amount of hot air coming out of him.

Where was I? Establish a statutory committee of the college to approve courses and providers, outline notice, appeal, suspension and cancellation provisions for teachers who do not complete the professional learning requirements, and determine the transitional requirements for mandatory recertification.

Approximately 40,000 practising classroom teachers and 6,500 new teachers would be the first to participate

in the mandatory recertification program, starting in the fall of 2001. All other members of the Ontario College of Teachers, including principals, vice-principals and other certified teachers, would begin in the fall of 2002. All members of the Ontario College of Teachers would be required to successfully complete seven core courses and seven elective courses during each five-year cycle. I don't think that sounds too onerous. As the previous speaker was suggesting, that's 14 courses over five years. As I understand it, there's a test at the end of each course, when all the information is fresh in your mind. This seems to me not to be too onerous and to be something that makes sense for recurrent training.

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Core courses would focus on curriculum knowledge, student assessment, special education, teaching strategies, classroom management and leadership, use of technology, and communicating with parents and students. Course lengths will vary according to learning requirements of the topic.

The courses and their providers would be approved by a professional learning committee of the Ontario College of Teachers, a key partner in this initiative. The professional learning committee would be established as a committee with statutory authority to approve courses and providers. The committee would be made up of five minister's appointees and six council appointees. The six council appointees would be two elected council members, two council members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council and two council members at large.

The committee would approve providers and courses to meet the professional development needs of both new and experienced teachers. Regulations would set out the minimum criteria for the courses. It is anticipated that the regulations would require that the courses be related to student achievement, be linked to the core competency statements developed by the ministry in consultation with education partners, and include tests or other assessments to ensure they have been completed successfully.

Approved courses would include professional development activities and programs in which many teachers already participate to improve their skills or to teach a new subject. For example, many courses and programs currently offered by school boards as part of their required professional activities programs for teachers would be eligible for the new recertification program if they meet the criteria.

It should be noted that other programs can be taken as part of this recertification. For example, one qualification course counts for four recertification courses. So there are different ways of meeting the re-certification requirements.

The bill also includes transitional provisions to ensure that an adequate supply of professional learning courses and providers are ready for September 2001. During this time, the minister would have transitional authority to approve courses and providers to meet the September 2001 implementation date.

The minister would also be able to delegate this transitional authority to the chair of the college's governing

council to allow the college to do the initial approvals process itself. This would give the professional learning committee time to appoint its members and to publish its approval procedures.

This legislation, if approved, is part of our comprehensive plan to ensure that Ontario's public education system can achieve excellence. Our new approach to teaching excellence through rigorous professional development will ensure that all teachers stay up to date and have the skills and knowledge to help students achieve the higher standards we have set out for them.

A big part of this bill is about stability. Ontario students deserve an education system that prepares them well for the future. They need excellent teaching, a solid grounding in the basics, and confidence to be successful in an increasingly competitive world. Students also need a stable school environment in order to learn properly and to succeed.

The purpose of Bill 80 is to ensure students have the stability that parents and students have been asking for. We are taking this step because we want to ensure that students spend more time in the classroom and less time caught up in labour disputes. I certainly heard from many people in Parry Sound-Muskoka in my first month in elected office when the support workers' strike was occurring in my riding.

Parents and students have expressed concerns about how labour disputes between school boards and teachers or other employee unions have disrupted the education year. They have told us that our students need to be in school and studying if they are to learn the new curriculum and properly prepare for their future. Our legislation would ensure that this happens.

Bill 80 would provide that the first collective agreement between a board and teacher bargaining agent entered into following July 1, 2001, would expire on August 31, 2004. Subsequent agreements would have a term of three years. Local agreements are clearly the best solution. But we must also ensure that even during collective bargaining, the interests of students come first. By phasing in this new three-year contract requirement, labour disputes would be fewer and students' learning would continue to be our top priority.

We have ensured that school boards have the flexibility and funding they need to reach fair and reasonable agreements. While some have claimed that it is unreasonable to demand three-year agreements, a number of school boards and teacher unions already have two- or three-year contracts. Our new legislation will ensure students, parents and teachers that the longer three-year contracts and labour peace will be the norm, and I'm sure that's what all parents and students want. Beginning September 1, 2004, every collective agreement between a board and a teachers' union will be for three years.

We are also working to support students and protect them from labour disputes with non-teaching staff. As we have seen recently in Toronto and Windsor-Essex this year and also in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, the support workers' strikes had a significant impact on the

students. That is why we are proposing that our legislation enhance the role of the Education Relations Commission. The commission provides important non-partisan advice to government when a teachers' strike is putting students' education at risk and there may be need for back-to-work legislation. Our new legislation, if approved, would have the Education Relations Commission provide the same kind of advice about strikes and lockouts involving non-teaching employees of school boards.

We believe that students need to be able to attend classes regularly. They need opportunities to play sports, act in school plays and try out for chess tournaments. They also need their teachers and support workers to be available to support them. The legislation we have introduced helps ensure students have the stable environment they need in which to learn and prepare for the future. School boards will have the flexibility to provide students with the co-instructional activities they need, and with the new teacher testing program, teachers will have the up-to-date training they need to help our students succeed.

We are taking these steps because we are committed to making Ontario schools the best in the country and among the very best in the world. We are committed to providing students in Ontario with the very highest standards of publicly funded education. We are committed to providing students with the tools and the environment they need to succeed. We are keeping our commitment to provide the quality education that parents want for their children in a stable learning environment. Parents and teachers are looking for better ways to resolve collective agreement issues. We are acting to bring stability to our schools. Ontario's students deserve nothing less.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions and comments?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have two minutes to quickly respond to the points that were made. I find the timing of this bill, first of all, an interesting diversion from the mess the government has got itself in with its introduction of the tax credit for private schools in Ontario. This becomes, again, as usual with this government, a diversion tactic. The reality with this bill is this shows again what is contained in the timing of this legislation, that frankly Mike Harris will continue to play politics with education, with kids' careers, with teachers, to try to benefit their own political agenda here.

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This bill has nothing to do with bringing stability into the classroom. Think about it. You're saying to school boards right across the province now, "You control the funding." I understand that. The government controls the funding for school boards. They determine how much school boards are going to get. They've actually cut funding, according to your own estimates, to education in Ontario since you've taken office.

Now you're saying to school boards, "Negotiate three-year contracts, but with no guarantee of how much money we're going to give you." Think about this.

You're not saying to the school boards, "We're going to guarantee you stable funding for three years. Now you know exactly what you're getting. Now you can go out and negotiate these contracts." One could understand that rationale if you had the other piece of the puzzle here. But you conveniently left out the most important part. So school boards will now go out and have to be forced by this government to negotiate three-year contracts.

Interestingly enough, the timing makes sure that it expires after the next provincial election, of course, so you can get your way out of that one without any dispute. And you're saying to school boards, "If we don't give you the money that is necessary for the contracts you negotiate, you'll have to find a way of making it happen." What does that mean? Fewer teachers, larger classrooms, fewer textbooks, fewer computers, difficult working conditions. That is the climate.

What you're doing is guaranteeing instability and chaos in the educational system because you've lost the public relations war. A few years ago we were winning that one. Now people understand that all you are concerned about is attacking teachers and attacking education in Ontario and you're desperately now trying to get your way out of this by saying, "This is going to create stability for three years." It's going to create instability for three years and there's the mess that you've created for the last six in this province.

Mr Christopherson: The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka mentioned during the course of his remarks the issue of teacher testing. I think it's worthwhile to put again on the record exactly what the Ontario College of Teachers, who are going to be the ones who will administer the tests, say about this government's announcement. I'm quoting from a June 7 news release. It states:

"The timing of the government's plan to launch a teacher recertification program this September is unreasonable and the costs are unknown, says the Ontario College of Teachers, the self-regulatory body for the teaching profession in Ontario....

"It is unrealistic to expect that this program that ties teacher licensing to completion of professional development can be successfully launched by September. The government is demanding that in a little over two months, with no clear funding commitments from the Ministry of Education related to implementation or maintenance, the college puts in place a recertification program for 40,000 classroom teachers—one third of teachers in publicly funded schools."

They go on to say, and this is the college chair being quoted: "I fear that the government does not recognize many of the very real implementation issues brought forward by the college," said Capstick. "But even more disturbing is the fact that the government is introducing changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act without any consultation with the college council."

A couple of points on this: first of all, once again, no consultation. You talk a good story, but you don't do it. Second, here you go rushing in again. Where have we

seen this before? The curriculum that was rushed in; the purchasing of textbooks, when the teachers didn't know what the curriculum was; and the best example, property tax reform. You had to bring in seven bill to correct the mistakes you made in the first one because you rushed.

Mr Dunlop: I am pleased to comment this evening on the fine presentation by the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka. As a small businessman in his past career—I know his wife's operating their lodge today—as the father of four children and now as a politician, Mr Miller certainly has a strong interest in the education system today.

I'm sure he agrees with most of the parents when they say they want to be assured that their children have a stable learning environment. That is why we've brought out this legislation. People like the people in Parry Sound-Muskoka were tired of labour disruptions. I certainly believe this bill goes a long way toward improving any type of labour disruptions we may have in the province of Ontario.

Our government has said over and over again that we will continue to invest heavily in the public school system. Today we fund 72 boards across the province and there are four streams of boards in that area.

I'd like to just say a couple of other words about the member for Parry-Sound Muskoka. I had an opportunity last week, on this past Friday, at the OPP auxiliary graduation ceremony out in the Mnjikaning First Nation, when Mr Miller's wife, Christine—who's not only an active business woman and the mother of four, but she also joined the OPP auxiliary and is going to volunteer in her community of Bracebridge. I just want to take this few moments to congratulate Mrs Miller and the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka for their strong involvement in the community. I'm sure that's why he won that area with over 50% of the vote in the last by-election.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I am pleased to make a few comments here too this evening.

I know that many of the teachers in my community and other parts of Ontario are teachers because they love the children. I guess they're getting sick of the government bashing them and blaming them for everything. I've been at fundraisers where they are trying to raise money for supplies and it's very hard. But the government has a habit of doing that. They are doing the same thing to the nurses and so on.

Getting back to the teachers, I don't know how, in the uncertainty that we have in Ontario right now, they can predict three years ahead in the contract. Governments can't do it because they don't know how the economy is going to be. I don't know how school boards will do it.

The government has to take into consideration the way things have changed in the last 25 years in this province and the type of students the teachers have to care for and try to get them on the right track. I've had meetings in my riding with people from all walks of life and they figure that the government, if they have any extra money, should roll it into the present education system, and back off and not criticize teachers.

I know that supplies are a big issue. I was just at one event in Cornwall the other day where we flipped hamburgers and hot dogs, trying to raise money. It's an annual event since this government took over, to make sure that they have enough supplies.

I've never seen so much criticism by any government. I've been in politics over four decades and I've never seen a government criticize and bash so many people as this present government does.

Mr Miller: I'd like to thank the members for Hamilton East, Hamilton West, Simcoe West and Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh for their comments.

The member for Hamilton East referred to his favourite subject, which was tax credits for people who choose independent schools. I'd like to point out that this bill has absolutely nothing to do with tax credits. It's just the topic that you folks like to come back to.

The opposition parties do their best to create chaos and make it seem like there is chaos in this province, but I think this is a pretty reasonable bill. The member for Hamilton West was talking about change occurring. Well, change is always harder than the status quo, but it is also necessary and this bill does require a lot of change.

I believe that recurrent training simply makes sense. It's not something that's onerous. It's something that should be enjoyable. It's something that is very positive. It's something that is very necessary for teachers and many other professionals. It's something that I think makes complete sense, and if done over five years with 14 classes and just a test at the end of each course you take, I don't think that is unreasonable at all.

I think a stable three-year contract just makes sense, as well. We all want our kids to not have their education interrupted, to be able to go and have complete years with uninterrupted education, and that simply makes sense. Co-instructional activities make sense as well, so I'm glad this bill addresses re-establishing co-instructional activities where they are missing in schools around this province.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to add my voice to Bill 80, and for those who are watching, please understand it's about 102 degrees Fahrenheit in here.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): It's going to get hotter.

Mr McMeekin: I think so.

What's in a name? The Stability and Excellence in Education Act—

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): And you're against that?

Mr McMeekin: I've got to tell you, I think it should be more appropriately named the Confront and Distract Act. I want to suggest that, given the record of this gov-

ernment, someone should have advised the minister, "If at first you don't succeed, stay away from skydiving. At least, if you're going to skydive, make sure you've got a parachute."

Basically, it seems that this piece of legislation is really all about confronting teachers and about the government trying to avoid the real educational issues that affect students across this province every single day. I want to speak to those issues tonight with respect to how it relates to parents, teachers and students who live in that great riding, from west to east, of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

At the outset, I want to say that in my brief time as the MPP and the more lengthy period as mayor of the town of Flamborough, I've met a number of children who dream big dreams and teachers who go out of their way to make those dreams come true. Those are strengths in this province.

It's a sad day when I look across from me and see Minister Ecker presenting a bill like this in the House. It's not so much what she's saying, but more the look in the eye that I think is causing so much consternation. Someone once said, "You start to cut your wisdom teeth the first time you bite off more than you can chew." It's pretty clear to me that this government, when it comes to education, has bitten off a lot more than it can chew.

I'm told I should have announced I'm sharing time. I don't think that's necessary, but just in case it is, I'll be sharing some time this evening with the members from Hamilton Mountain and Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

We've got some great players in this province and a wonderful team when it comes to education. What we need is some better coaching from that side of the House, if I dare say it.

The look in the eye that I referred to tells me that the minister really doesn't believe much of what she's saying. I think that she's being told by somebody higher up the ladder just what to do. This is just like the situation that exists around the private education tax vouchers. If Minister Ecker had her way, private education tax vouchers would never have been part of the budget bill. She knows, as I know and as many others in this province know, that there were other approaches that would have made much more sense. For example, pulling together a select committee of the members of the various parties in this House to look at how this important issue might have been handled I think would have made a lot of sense and would have saved us a lot of grief and the turmoil we're facing now. So too would have been the prospect of broadening what constitutes the definition of public education in this province. I think that would have been another useful approach, albeit one that this government chose not to explore.

The first main obstacle in this bill and in trying to make sense of the Confront and Distract Act is how the ministry hopes to have individual boards negotiate with teacher unions these multi-year contracts that they clearly aren't prepared to provide funding for. What absolute nonsense. I hope those who are viewing this evening give

some thought to this. What parent would make an important multi-year financial commitment without looking at the resources available to them?

It raises the prospect of turmoil with negotiations, because frankly it's difficult to conceive how anything close to good-faith bargaining is going to occur, given this scenario. This is the government that talks fondly about accountability. Simply put, this is not good public policy. In fact, it's another example of how this government seems to have a lousy manager strategy.

Let me just explain. This government keeps off-loading costs and putting all kinds of demands on its so-called partners throughout Ontario without any kind of assistance or any kind of guarantee with respect to funding. We've seen it in the environmental sector, finding traumatic consequences in the Walkerton situation. We've certainly seen it in the health care system. I can think of the situation where \$42 million was ripped from the Hamilton Health Sciences unit, then a management person was put in there, \$42 million was returned, and everybody was supposed to stand up and clap because we had somehow reclaimed the status quo. Now we see it happening in education.

Honesty is always the best policy. It's not always the cheapest, and we can't do education on the cheap.

The only real thing accomplished in this particular section of the legislation is that once again the Tories are using a large stick on teachers to let them know who's the boss. You would think the government would try to improve on the ever more detrimental relationship that they have some major responsibility for creating over the last five years, but instead they add even more gasoline to the already burning fire. When will they ever learn? Somebody once said good judgment was based on experience, and experience invariably on bad judgment. It's OK to make mistakes, but we should at least make new ones. Instead, this government seems intent on adding a deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars.

The second area of concern is the whole problem of restoring extracurricular activities to secondary school students. Extracurricular experience really defines for many students in this province the essence of much of what constitutes their educational experience. Needless to say, over the last couple of years students have done without sports clubs and without activities because of this government's unwillingness to listen. Our leader presented you with the Liberal peace plan some seven months ago, with a number of solutions that were broadly supported by school boards across the province, administrators, teachers and parents. This government would not accept this solution, not because it didn't contain good ideas but because politics always seems to come before student welfare these days in Ontario. I want to say to this government, you should watch how you treat people on the way up, because chances are pretty good you're going to pass them soon on the way down.

Right now what seems to be a problem in this section of the bill is that most of the regulations have not been

clearly explained and some haven't even been announced yet. As a result of this, some teachers believe that they may have dramatically increased class sizes and that this government could very easily, if past performance is any indicator, unilaterally increase teaching time. Unfortunately, as a result of the obvious lack of trust and goodwill that exists between the minister and her government and teachers across this province, there is concern that teachers will end up in the same mess that ignited the problems in the first place. The issue of student-teacher time in the classroom simply has to be resolved through the upcoming regulations; if not, the problems again will rear their ugly heads next September. Sometimes I think the definition of a teacher from members on that side of the House is someone who can drink three cups of coffee before 8 am and hold it until 3:30 in the afternoon.

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The third section of the bill addresses the need for mandatory recertification for teachers, the so-called government report card. If this government's method of working with teachers was to be graded, they would certainly receive an F, for failure. The only thing they seem to have accomplished is to drive thousands of teachers away from a profession they love. We have over 100 excellent teachers in the Hamilton area and 200 in the London area, really good people, who are just so totally fed up with the state of disarray that has been created in this province that they're leaving the profession. They're leaving the profession in droves.

I want to mention what I'm hearing from my constituents about what's really going on in education in Ontario, what this government needs to be concentrating on in this bill before us today. I want to suggest that the essence of our effort ought to be to see that every child has a chance to succeed, and that we must attempt to assure that each child has equal opportunity in this province—not an opportunity to be equal, but an opportunity to be different, to recognize and then realize themselves whatever unique potential of body, mind and spirit they possess.

Only this past month, I've heard from four separate families in my riding who have children with special needs who require an educational assistant. The doctor and health professionals in each situation identify the child as having a need for a full-time educational assistant, and school reports confirm this. The only problem is that the Hamilton-Wentworth school board states repeatedly that they do not have the funding needed to provide the assistance required.

Let me put a real face on this problem, if I might. The member from Simcoe North might want to take note of this in terms of what he might say to Emily Carrie, a seven-year-old grade 1 student at Mary Hopkins school in Waterdown, who this year received a full-time EA for a half-day of school but has had that EA cut. Now she can't attend school at all, not even on a part-time basis. Karli Dunbar, a seven-year-old girl, also a grade 1 student at Mary Hopkins, has a number of safety issues related to health problems that she has encountered. Her

EA has been cut back to 0.5, with the very real risk of putting her school year in jeopardy.

These are real people, little kids with significant problems. They don't care much about the politics, and their parents don't care much about a lot of things that go on in this place, but they certainly see the turmoil in very practical human ways that this government has contributed significantly to.

Let me tell you about a local advisory group that I've set up in my riding. We try to do politics a little differently in ADFA. We have a series of listening groups: one on the environment; one on education; later we hope to create groups in the health care area and agriculture, and a constituent assembly as well. Last week I had over 60 people attend the first meeting of our educational listening group, together with over 600 years of educational experience in that room, 600 years of experience with educational issues in our community. Here's a list of what they had to say on the issues.

Like their MPP, they believe it's important to point direction, not fingers. Some of them asked that I speak directly to what they think is needed to restore stability and excellence, the so-called name of this act, to our school system.

First and foremost, they wanted me to share with you that this government needs to begin to listen to people again, people in the trenches: the students, the parents, the educators. They wanted me to share this evening that there's never a wrong time to do the right thing. They wanted me to raise a number of significant, real problems that they face. It was a three-hour meeting and it was traumatic. I wish some members from the other side of the House had been there.

They wanted me to raise the issue of post-secondary tuition fees that have escalated 65% in the last five years. They wanted me to raise the issue of a funding formula that pits communities against each other, particularly on the issue of school closings. They wanted me to talk about small rural schools like Lynden public school, that would have one teacher teaching three different grades with different curriculums in one schoolroom this fall. They wanted me to draw to the attention of this House the need to recognize the importance of investing in the early years to promote early literacy. And the real heart-breaker: they wanted me to raise the issue of a lack of funding for special education students, students with special needs. I referred to two such young people a few moments ago. They mentioned the issue of teacher morale: teachers who are not able to take it any more and are simply bailing out of the system.

One of them had an interesting quote about leadership. She said that outstanding leaders—I commend this to the minister and her government—go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of those they have contact with, knowing that if people believe in themselves, it is absolutely amazing what they can accomplish. Teachers are sick and tired of being dumped on. We need a coach for this team who can bring out the best in people.

The meeting asked me to raise the issue of the need to invest real dollars in the capping of primary grades at no

more than 20 students. They also wanted to have noted the challenge of the looming double cohort, which my colleague Dr Bountrogianni I'm sure will speak to. They spoke about grade 3 children terrified about testing and test results, and about parents who felt, for a combination of reasons, that test results were being used not as a tool but more as a club, that they were being misused currently or would be potentially misused down the road.

There was a lot of discussion about the disempowerment of school boards and the disparity between boards, particularly with respect to capital projects. Predictably, there was a reference to this government no longer providing capital dollars but in fact requiring school boards to take out massive loans, liens against the future, liens that cause them to go into debt to finance the construction of new schools.

They wanted me to note, and I'm sure the Minister of Community and Social Services will be interested in this, that they see a profound disjoint between the social services system and the workings of the school board, and some real discontinuity there.

It is clearly time, I believe, for this government to start listening again to those who have decided to set apart a number of years to obtain the training to engage themselves in the important profession of making a difference in the young lives of the children who are so very important to us.

Someone recently suggested that in an age where capital can be borrowed, raw resources purchased and technology copied, the only real advantage we have in Ontario and Canada will be recognized directly contingent on our ability to invest in our young people. This isn't an expenditure; it's an investment in our young people.

Finally, they wanted me to suggest that the \$2.2 billion in education cuts that have been independently verified by the recent social policy think tank ought to be restored.

With those comments, and with any kind of commitment at all from the other side of the House to start listening, we can take all of the wonderful things, all of the wonderful potential that's in Ontario, and use it to shape the wonderful quality of life that we used to take for granted in this province but is now so seriously at risk.

2030

The Deputy Speaker: Comments?

Mr Christopherson: I want to compliment my colleague from Hamilton, the riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. Some of his last comments, where he talked about the investment in young people, are what I want to pick up on.

Earlier on, I was having an exchange across the floor with one of the government members on this very issue that speaks to where my colleague was. It was on the whole issue of special needs and kids who need the special education assistance. During the interchange across the floor, the member quoted how much money there was and I said, "That's not enough." Then he said,

"Well, that's typical of you types. It's tax and spend"—I'm paraphrasing, but tax and spend—and that's what really launched me.

Mr Dunlop: Taxaholics. Tax addicts.

Mr Christopherson: Here he goes again. Now it's tax addicts. I wish they would be addicted to education and to children, because that's what upset me the most. He was concerned about taxes—that's his number one priority—and over here our number one priority is the kids.

Mr Wettlaufer: What did you put in when you were there?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate that you can't always have both, and when you have to make a choice between a tax cut and a child who has special needs, I say to the member from Kitchener Centre the same as I said to Simcoe North: come on in to Hamilton and you tell the parents of those disabled children, those children with special challenges, that your tax cuts are more important than that kid's future, that child's education. You come on in to Hamilton and make that argument. I don't believe for a second you will, because you can do it safely here in this nice—very warm—place protected with guards so nobody can get at you. Come on in to Hamilton where people can respond to you themselves.

Mr Wettlaufer: I have to respond to the member for Hamilton West. He stands in his place and pontificates as though he has a monopoly on caring for other people. He has such a monopoly that that government did dick all—dick all—for those poor children. You did nothing. You did absolutely nothing when you were in government for the disadvantaged. Those children that you're pontificating about, what did you do? Nothing, nothing, nothing. We're doing far more for them than you ever did.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions, comments?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I would like to turn back to the comments of my colleague the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot. I'm particularly pleased that my colleague dealt with the instability in the education system thanks to a succession of legislative moves on the part of this government as well as the continuous beating up of the teachers who provide both the stability and the excellence in the public education system.

As my colleague has quite rightly noted, thanks to the fact that this government has made teachers the scapegoats for its cost-cutting agenda, we now have a serious teacher shortage. Teachers have been demoralized, they've been driven out of the profession in droves, and we do not have young people in the province of Ontario coming into faculties of education because this government has so demeaned and devalued the teaching profession.

How can this government bring forward legislation that stands in the name of stability and excellence in education when their entire focus has been on the kinds of changes which have destabilized the public education system?

We know that one of the things that's in this bill before us tonight is some measure of a retreat on one of

the truly destabilizing measures, one of the more recent destabilizing measures this government undertook, and that was to decide that when they had a problem in Durham where teachers were saying no to the enforced agenda of this government, the government decided to force its agenda on all of the teachers in the province by bringing in legislation that said teachers would be forced to do what they had always done voluntarily in providing extracurricular activities. Clearly this was unenforceable legislation. Clearly this was another attack on teachers, and it made teachers in this province angrier in ways than I have ever seen before.

There is some measure of retreat here; we're not sure how much. I guess we have to trust the Harris government to, through regulation, actually make this situation better. I don't think there's any reason why teachers in this province are going to trust a government that has so belittled and demeaned them over the last six years.

Mr Bisson: Two points. The first one is, to the public that have been lobbying and phoning and writing letters to the Conservative government about their cuts to special education, I want to say that your letters, your faxes, your phone calls are starting to hit the point. We are now finally seeing Tories really get agitated in the House, such as just happened when the member from Hamilton rose on a response and talked about the reality of what's happening in special-needs education. The truth is there are 37,000 kids in Ontario today who are on waiting lists and can't get services. That's up 2,000 from last year alone. You know as well as I do, because our constituency offices get it—I get it in Timmins, I get it in Kapuskasing, I get it in Hearst and I get it in Smooth Rock—you've got parents who have kids who are unable to get the services they need in order to give those kids an opportunity to adapt to what happens within the school life. That's just the reality.

You've completely taken out the money that the boards had. Prior to your coming to government in 1995, the boards had money to deal with that as well as the money from the Ministry of Education. You play around with the figures and you say, "Oh, we've given more to the Ministry of Education," but the reality is you took everything away that the boards had. That's the reality. So now when I see the members across get all agitated, I encourage my friends out there, I encourage all people who have a care for public education, who have a care for the issue of special education, to keep on pressuring those Tory members, because it's starting to work. I am just seeing them unravel, and it tells me that they're getting somewhere.

On the other issue, the attack on teachers, I just say to the government, enough is enough. You've gotten all the press releases, you've got all the hits, you've got the short-term political gain that you were to get from attacking teachers, but now we're starting to pay the price. It is not good for education, it is not good for kids, and I say get off your kick because at the end of the day the only people you're hurting are the kids, the same as you're doing when it comes to special-needs education.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr McMeekin: Just very briefly, someone once said there's a difference between being a wise person and a brilliant person: a wise person only believes half of what they hear; a brilliant person knows which half. I think increasingly in Ontario more and more people are reaching that brilliance stage. We see it in our office every day as teachers and parents and students almost without exception continue to articulate their concerns about how public education is going off the rails in Ontario, seriously off the rails.

I hope I never, ever get to the day where I can't believe that members on both sides of this House believe, as I believe, that the measure of a mature, compassionate and caring society is how we meet or at least attempt to meet the legitimate needs of the most vulnerable in our society. When I see students like Emily and Karli and when I hear the stories of Emily and Karli and speak to their parents, I want to say to the member opposite that the last thing in the world I would ever want to accuse them of being is tax addicts or those who want to exploit their situation in a tax-addicted way. We all want to see responsible government here, and responsible government has everything to do with how we reach out and touch the lives of young people and ensure that whatever God-given potential they've been given has every chance to be fully met. I'm hopeful that to whatever extent we have lost touch, we can somehow find the collective will to get our act back together again so these kids and other children like them don't have to go through this mess that we're in.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure for me to rise tonight and add to the debate on Bill 82, the Stability and Excellence in Education Act, 2001. I'm going to try to speak a little bit historically about how we got here with regard to the issue of teaching time which is in the bill.

Before I go forward, though, I want to mention, I remember probably six or 12 months ago in this House I stood and talked about the historical confrontational situation that has existed in this province between the government of Ontario and teacher unions.

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I recall reading from a book—and Mr Conway across the way was the Minister of Education in the Liberal government between 1987 and 1990—that in the 1990 election the teachers' unions followed Peterson everywhere in the campaign and protested. They were angry then about pension issues. This was the main thing they were irritated about back then.

I remember in the 1990 to 1995 period, when the 1995 election came along, teachers' unions were just totally cheesed off at the NDP government and wanted to get rid of the NDP government because of the social contract. Lo and behold, when we came in 1995 and 1999 and brought in a variety of changes to the system, including a new and tougher curriculum, province-wide testing for students, standardized report cards and a variety of other

things, we were protested against by the teachers' unions every step of the way and in the 1999 election they campaigned against us.

Now those teachers' unions are largely back in the Liberal camp and they're one of their largest fundraisers, and many of the federation representatives are in the Liberal riding associations. That's fine, anyone can decide where they want to go. The members opposite constantly lament the situation between the teachers and the government, but historically speaking, any fair on-looker would see that these fights, these debates, the government making a proposal and teachers' unions opposing it, has gone on for well over a decade in this province.

It was very interesting for me to see Lorrie Goldstein's column the other day about John Clarke, the head of OCAP. He lamented the fact the media was giving all of this attention to OCAP, and he did a literature search. He went back to 1987, 1988, the early 1990s and found all of the times that John Clarke was in the news, using almost the same language that he is using today to protest poverty, to protest government, to protest what he perceived to be government inaction. It's very similar here. I know a lot of people who've been in this place for a long time will probably know there's this familiar refrain of this debate and this fight between teachers' unions and the government, and we still have it today.

I want to talk, though, about a section of this bill that expands the definition of teaching time, and in so doing really will probably lower the amount of actual class time that secondary school teachers will have to spend before their classes. I just want to talk a little bit about that whole debate and how that has come about.

When we came into office in 1995, we appointed the Education Improvement Commission and we asked David Cooke, who was the former NDP Minister of Education, to chair that commission. That commission has done all kinds of consultations across the province with school boards, teachers' unions, parents, students and everybody in the education field, and they have come out with a variety of reports. I think they are on their third or fourth report now.

In their very first report—and if I recall correctly, it is one of the very first recommendations that the Education Improvement Commission made to this government—they looked at secondary school teaching time and they said that at six out of eight classes, which is three in the first semester, three in the second semester, they were at the very bottom of teaching time of secondary school teachers across this country. They were at the very bottom in the province of Ontario. Mr Cooke and the Education Improvement Commission said that we should increase that to, on average, seven out of eight periods. So every teacher in secondary schools across the province in a semestered system might teach three in the first and four in the second semester. That was their recommendation and, as I said, it was in their first report and it was one of the very first recommendations that they made.

Several other recommendations of that first report were in Bill 160. Many people may remember in 1997 all of the debates, all of the protests, the illegal teacher walkouts across this province over Bill 160. Now, at that time—and you could go back and read the newspapers—it was humorous yet sad, the amount of mythology that was put out there about what actually was in Bill 160. I had teachers telling me that they were going to have class sizes of 70 kids. I assured them that wasn't the case. There was differentiated staffing, and they said they were going to get rid of all the qualified teachers and bring people in and pay them \$6.85 an hour to teach classes, and I said, "No, that's not the case." And on and on it went.

Really and truly, in that bill, the two things that were most important to teachers' unions were, number one, we were taking away the school board's right to increase property taxes. For years, even in years when provincial governments were giving double-digit increases in grants to school boards, school boards were ratcheting up education property taxes. One of the statistics I remember from 1985 to 1995, I think it was, was that property taxes went up on average 120% from school boards. I went back and I remember looking, especially in the late 1980s, at large increases in grants from the Liberal government of the day, but at the same time, despite those large increases in grants, there were large increases in property taxes.

So we said, "No more will the school boards be able to increase property taxes." Obviously the unions did a great job year after year of getting pay raises and looking in other ways after their members' interests, usually whipsawing one school board up against the other. School boards always knew that they could dip into property taxes, increase their revenues and make any of their labour relations problems go away. It happened in spades all over the province. So that was the number one thing.

The number two thing was secondary school teaching time, as suggested by the Education Improvement Commission, was going to be increased. It was going to go from six out of eight classes to, on average, 6.67. The way this would actually work out was that every other year a teacher would have to teach three in one semester and four in the next. Every other teacher, every other year, would have to teach that extra course per semester. They also would have to teach a teacher advisor program, which would make up that extra 0.17. That was the other big issue on the table.

I remember after the strike a lot of elementary teachers, at the end of the day, once Bill 160 was implemented, said, "Hey, why did we go out on a two-week walkout? What was in this that really necessitated us doing an illegal walkout for two weeks?" They all realized that the reason they were out on the street—and I believe at the time, if I remember the dynamics between the unions, it was actually the elementary teacher unions that finally said, "Hold on a second here. Are we doing this for secondary school teaching time?" They were the first ones to break and decided they were going to go

back to work. They did, and then everyone else went back to work after about two weeks. So that's what that came down to.

Once that got implemented, once Bill 160 was passed and we started to move down the line from 6.67 as suggested—actually the Education Improvement Commission wanted us to bring in seven out of eight; we went halfway to what they said we should do—a lot of the secondary school teachers' unions across the province actually ended up still teaching three and three, six courses.

Among themselves, a lot of them decided they were going to bail out on extracurricular activities as a way to say, "Look, we can't do this. We can't teach an extra course every other year in one of the semesters. We can't do it, so we're going to withdraw services," even though during the debates on Bill 160 I remember quite clearly they said, "You know, the Education Improvement Commission has identified that we're on the lowest rung among all the other provinces for teaching time. That's true, but we also spend a lot of time marking papers and, as part of our job, we do extracurricular activities."

The problem was that when they withdrew extracurricular activities and ran work-to-rule campaigns, they didn't feel any impact. Only the kids felt the impact: they couldn't get their sports, they couldn't get their music. It wasn't defined as part of their job, and therefore there was no impact on their pay packet when they went on work-to-rule campaigns. So we brought in Bill 74.

Bill 74 was an attempt by this government to say we were going to define the teaching time so that extracurricular or co-curricular activities were actually part of the defined teaching time. Therefore, if they wanted to withdraw that service, they would find it impacting their pay packet.

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At the time, I remember the unions said, "No, no, no. Don't do this. We're not going to continue with this withdrawal of our services." So in actual fact we didn't proclaim parts of that bill that would have made it an assignable duty to teach extracurricular activities. The teachers' unions said that they would no longer do work-to-rule; they would return to extracurricular activities. Lo and behold, in many boards they did. In my boards in Niagara Falls, both my public and separate boards, secondary school teachers had full participation in extracurricular activities in the last year, but many boards across the province continued that job action.

So we went out and set up the Brown commission and asked them to go out and meet the teachers, go out and meet with the boards, students, parents and come back and tell us what we should do. They came back and gave us a report and said, "Well, you guys are going to keep bashing heads. The government needs to give a little and the teachers' unions need to give a little." What's in this bill on teaching time is exactly that: it's the government giving a little.

For people at home—and I've actually had lots of teachers in my office several times to explain how 6.67

works and how 6.25 works and so on and so forth—what it actually says is that if you have four teachers in a semestered system, teacher A would teach 3 and 3, teacher B would teach 3 and 3, teacher C would teach 3 and 4 in the second semester, and teacher D would teach 3 and 3. So what you get down to is that each year, one out of four teachers should teach four periods every other semester. That's it. Once every four years, one out of four teachers is going to teach an extra course. The rest of them are still 3 and 3. That would come to an average of 6.25 periods per secondary school teacher. So it's really quite simple.

The members opposite know this, yet a lot of the members opposite persist in putting these comments out about how we're going to have a quarter of a teacher in a semestered class. That's nonsense. The boards know that's nonsense, and most of the boards don't do that and won't do that, and I think most of the secondary school teachers know that's nonsense.

So what happens now is that a principal will look at his teachers and he'll say, "You know, Fred's going to teach 3 and 3 this semester and he should teach 3 and 3 because he's a new teacher in English. He's got a lot of marking, a lot of learning to do so he's going to teach 3 and 3. Joan has been here for 25 years. She's been teaching chemistry; she's got it down pat. She's going to teach 3 and 4." Then he can look at the rest of his teachers and decide that that one is going to teach 3 and 3 for this reason, this one's going to teach 3 and 4 and so on.

Principals are there in the schools working with their staff. They know which ones are doing extracurricular activities. They know which ones can handle an extra semester once every four years. If they want to do it equally, as the unions like to say, everybody has to have the same teaching load, then they can just rotate that period. What's important to note is that principals have the discretion to decide to assign that period based on how they think workload should be designated in their school. That's what is important in this bill: each year just having one of those four teachers teach a fourth period. We were at, each year, two of those four teachers having to teach a fourth period. We've compromised.

I note that even Jim Smith, when we brought this bill in and introduced it—he's the President of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association—said, "The province has really shown its good faith today when it says it will repeal sections of Bill 74 that would have forced teachers to perform these activities." Annie Kidder, who is obviously no fan of the government—her organization I believe exists just to protest the government—says, "This is a big concession on the government's part and I'm glad they made it." That's not an easy thing for that lady to say. Mr Brown, who was the chair of the commission that recommended that we compromise, came forward after the minister made the announcement about what's in this bill and said, "That's the way it should be done. That's what we were talking about in our report. Someone needed to make a compro-

mise.” Ray Mulholland, the chair of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, says, “It’s welcome news because it creates harmony in our secondary schools.” Liz Sandals: “The government, to their credit, has had the nerve to make the first move and has put some building blocks to a compromise on the table.”

So that’s a very short, quick, fair and reasonable history lesson of what’s come forward and how this whole question of teaching time has gone forward.

I volunteered in schools for many years. I’ve coached basketball at my local high school, boys’ and girls’ basketball at the high school level; I’ve just finished coaching John Marshall grade 7 and 8 kids this year. I got back to it for the first time since 1995. I played sports throughout my school years and got a great deal of value from extracurricular activities. I know a lot of the teachers who coached and I know a lot of the volunteers, because I had as many volunteers coaching me in my playing days as I did teachers. A lot of those teachers probably prefer the coaching and the extracurricular stuff that they did to the day-to-day work of teaching.

A lot of them, like myself as a student, quite often felt, “I find school boring this year or this semester,” and I lived for basketball. I had basketball and that kept me going to school all the time. I know I’m short, and I probably surprised the member opposite that I actually played the game, but I did, and some would say I played it very well. It’s something that kept me coming back, and I think those activities keep a lot of kids coming back to school. I know that my coach in high school, Mr Lalicich, was actually a volunteer. He volunteered to coach football; he volunteered to coach basketball. He was someone from the community, not a teacher. I knew that if I didn’t go to school, I didn’t play, so that was a very important part of my experience. I tried to use those same principles when I coached at the high school or the junior high level.

So I think this is another compromise on behalf of the government. We’re down to 6.25, so one out of four secondary school teachers will have to teach a fourth class now each year. I think that’s very fair and reasonable; Mr Brown said it’s fair and reasonable; Liz Sandals and even some of the teacher union heads have said that this is a fair and reasonable compromise. Now I hope, as we go forward, that teachers will all come back and they will, all those who love to do extracurriculars, do that. I hope we won’t see the posters of a pair of eyes outside a teacher’s classroom saying, “We’re watching you,” for those who are volunteering to do extracurricular activities when the teachers’ union really doesn’t want most people to do them. I hope all that ends. I hope that gets behind us, because extracurricular activities are a vital component of any kid’s school experience. I think this bill is very helpful to that end.

I applaud the minister for setting out a commission, asking for a commission’s advice and, when that commission came back, not putting that advice on the shelf and actually moving on that advice, just the way we did with Mr Cooke’s advice in the Education Improvement

Commission, when he brought forward the first report, the second report, the third report. We’ve always acted on these reports that come forward from the Education Improvement Commission. When you set up a commission and say, “Look, go out and help us solve a problem,” and they come back with good, sound advice, one has to look at it seriously and one has to implement at least a large part of that advice. Otherwise, what’s the sense of having those people out there?

I congratulate the minister. I will stand here and support the bill. In my board, as I said, both in public and separate, we’ve had full extracurricular activities in the past couple of years and I look forward to other secondary school teachers around the province finally putting down their objections and getting back and doing this very vital component of extracurricular activities in schools around the province.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions, comments?

Mr McMeekin: I appreciate the comments of the member for Niagara Falls and the time he took to lay out the details of the bill and the teaching time. I would certainly concur with him that it’s a start. There have been some voices in the educational sectors out there, as the member for Niagara Falls made reference to, who like at least the start with respect to this legislation.

I do want to note, though, just for the record that members on this side of the House don’t consider Annie Kidder’s group as existing with the sole raison d’être to criticize the government. I’ve met some of the People for Education and I certainly don’t get that take from them.

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As an old history major, I find it particularly interesting how history can be shaped depending on where you’re sitting. The reference to some of the quotes, particularly those of Ray Mulholland—my fellow members from the Hamilton area will perhaps see some of the irony in that. As I recall, it was Mr Mulholland who wrote during the confrontation and said that in his 30-some-odd years as a school trustee he had never seen a worse abomination in terms of educational policy and leaving school boards out on a limb. I can recall too Mr Mulholland talking about the school plan, what they could do with the \$9.1 million they saved from the strike to help people like Emily and Karli. The minister from the area said that for obvious reasons they didn’t want to affirm those awful teacher unions—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Well, it depends. If you guys want to start up, we can have another blow-up, I say to the minister across the way.

I want to pick up where my colleague was on the issue of quoting Ray Mulholland. I know Ray Mulholland. I worked with Ray Mulholland. I’m a friend of Ray Mulholland’s. I won’t go any further with that setting-up, except to say that if you want to quote Mr Mulholland, I certainly can’t think of a better source of information about what’s going on on the ground. But I would ask the member to be a little less selective, because Ray

Mulholland has indeed for almost 40 years been the trustee in ward 4, which happens to be my previous ward when I was on Hamilton council, and many of those years he spent as the chair of the board. He has been very forthright in his criticism of your funding policies, what that has meant to him and his colleagues and what that has meant for the kids in the system in Hamilton.

He specifically talks about the cuts in transportation that have caused enormous problems for us in Hamilton. He has a particular thing about the cuts to custodial care because, in the long run, under your formula, that no longer is considered classroom funding. I guess if the rooms aren't clean and the kids get sick, that has absolutely nothing to do with classroom learning under your funding. He has spoken about the new funding formula, where it is on a per-pupil basis and what that has meant for us, especially a board that has a lot of special needs.

There's a whole array of comments that Mr Mulholland has put on the record. I would ask you to give those equal weight to the one selective quote you decided to use tonight.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to congratulate the member for Niagara Falls for his comments this evening and for what I consider to be a fairly extensive history over the last 20 years of education in Ontario. I forgot about some of the problems with the union leaders and the different governments we've had throughout the province. I'm thinking again of when the member from Niagara Falls mentioned the David Peterson government, when Mr Conway was the Minister of Education, and how people were not happy with the pension reform and some of the work that was happening at that time and they turned on Mr Conway and the Peterson government in the 1990 provincial election. Then, with the social contract and Mr Rae's government, between 1990 and 1995, they turned on Mr Rae as well.

One of the things I want to briefly mention is the point he made about the increase in property taxes between 1985 and 1995. He's right; it was 120%. It is how the education tax bill was effected on our property taxes across the province. I believe we had in that same period of time an increase in enrolment of 16%. I believe that the inflation factor was around 40% at that time, and many people across the province—and I'm sure the member from Hamilton north, from the Flamborough area, as a municipal politician must remember the complaints we took about the rising education costs in Ontario. People talked about disentanglement and making sure the province would look after all of the controls.

I just want to say that I support the comment—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs McLeod: I'm surprised at the number of inaccuracies for lack of awareness on the part of the member for Niagara Falls about what's happening in education, particularly in his home area, since I understand he has a close relative who's on the board of education and should be able to make him aware of the underfunding realities in that particular board.

I was also surprised that the member for Niagara Falls suggested that there were lots of teachers who had

withdrawn their services in providing extracurricular activities. I say to the member from Niagara Falls, there were not lots; there were teachers in Durham region, the Minister of Education's region, who had chosen to withdraw their services. Because this government was not prepared to deal with that issue, they simply created a crisis for every other board by bringing in legislation that said, "We are going to force teachers to do what they have always done voluntarily," which in 99% of the boards across this province they were continuing to do voluntarily. They didn't start to withdraw their services until they were so angered by this government's attempting to force what they have always done out of their commitment to their students that teachers just got so fed up and so frustrated that they said, "We will not carry out this government's agenda for them."

I'm not surprised the member from Niagara Falls nor any other government member appears to want to talk about the ridiculous attempt in this bill to suggest they're bringing stability by having three-year contracts mandated when they only provide one year of funding. No wonder they don't want to talk about it. It's the most ludicrous piece of legislation I've probably seen. They are bad pieces of legislation, and we've seen lots of those, but this is ludicrous.

When it comes to this bill talking about excellence in education, and the member from Niagara Falls talking about the people in education, I wonder how closely he's looked at some of the facts People for Education have produced, such as 66% of schools reporting that students must share textbooks due to a shortage of supply and 63% of schools reported worn or out-of-date textbooks. The government, which has taken over total control of funding and downloaded other costs to municipalities, I say to the member from Niagara Falls, can't talk about—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Response?

Mr Maves: I'm saddened by the comments from the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. I know that one of the things we said when we came into office in 1995—and I remember during the whole Bill 160 process a lot of parents telling me about their textbooks held together by tape and sharing textbooks—we spent well over \$100 million in one year alone on textbooks, science equipment, computers. Just about anybody you talk to in the education system will admit that there are a lot more textbooks, computers, science supplies and so on in the schools today than there were five, six years ago.

The members from ADFA and from Hamilton West—actually, to the member for Hamilton West: everybody I quoted, if you paid any attention whatsoever, you'd realize are not traditional supporters of the government. Everyone I quoted is a traditional opponent of the government, and that's exactly why I quoted them. That tells you that all of these traditional opponents of the government support this legislation. So if the traditional opponents of the government support the legislation, then the members opposite surely can realize that we've thrown out an olive branch, a large olive branch, to the secondary school teachers' federation. That's the whole reason I quoted them in the first place.

I know the members opposite need to oppose because they're opposition, but I would hope they really take a second look at this, listen to the traditional opponents of the government who are supporting the government with this piece of legislation and think about supporting the bill as it goes forward, because the bill, as I said, very importantly is a compromise. While teachers still have 6.67 as the amount of time on average that they're supposed to spend in the classroom, only 6.25 of that now is actually teaching classes. We've expanded the definition of teaching time so they can spend some of that time doing some remedial work, some supply coverage and some other duties. It's an important concession, again, that the government has made, and I hope the opposition will support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

2110

Mrs Bountrogianni: It's a pleasure to come and debate this bill. After six years of creating instability and inducing lack of excellence in education, alas, we have Bill 80, the Stability and Excellence in Education Act. I will say one thing: at least you have acknowledged by virtue of the title that there is instability in education today. You have to ask yourselves why.

Between 1995 and 1999, when I was still working as a psychologist in the Hamilton board of education, we had a greater increase—a significant increase—in teacher absenteeism than ever before, and an increase in long-term disability for mental health reasons significant when compared to the years before.

When I was hired in 1988 by the Hamilton board, I was hired to work with children and to help teachers help children. What I ended up doing by the time I left in 1999 to take this position here is give stress management workshops to teachers. I don't think it's a coincidence that that happened between 1995 and 1999.

Again, when I was first elected in 1999, the very first week, what was on the agenda in my city and that of the members for Hamilton West and Aldershot-Ancaster? Twenty-two children were at home, disabled kids, because they didn't have educational assistants. They were at home for almost a month. They finally did get educational assistants, even though it wasn't in their budget, but they knew that they would have to pay the piper at some point. They didn't have the money, and the funding formula is so inflexible they couldn't find it anywhere else. And we had a strike. My kids were out three and a half weeks. The money had to come from somewhere. Now, after arbitration, in Hamilton we will have a loss of teaching staff, so even a larger student-teacher ratio. Forget about the rhetoric that you hear across the way: the classes are larger and larger. One of my schools, Fernwood school, has over 30 kids in the primary class. So I don't know what they mean about averages, but 30 kids in the primary at a school where there are a lot of special-needs kids is just unconscionable.

I'll start with the recertification and the fact that the College of Teachers wasn't consulted on this. How could

you not consult the professional body for teachers? That is ludicrous, to quote my colleague from Thunder Bay. That is absolutely ludicrous. How do you measure the competency of a teacher—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Members will come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain has the floor.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Come on, guys.

How do you measure the competency of a teacher who takes a personal interest in a troubled student's life? In approximately 1996, a high school student at Sir John A. Macdonald school—not in my riding; I believe in the riding of Hamilton West—was sexually abused by one of the counsellors at his co-op. This was a student who lived by himself, who was on student welfare. The physical education teacher at his school actually took him away from there because he was distraught and depressed and upset, and took him to his parents' house. They basically adopted him for the rest of the school year, and there was a lot of counselling for him to get over that situation.

How do you measure that on a test? How do you measure teaching special education on a test? How do you measure intuition when a teacher knows that something is wrong, can't quite put her or his finger on it but knows there's something wrong and refers the student on for assessment? Those are things you can't measure.

With respect to ensuring teacher competency and recruiting good teachers, that's very difficult after spending six years demoralizing them. The Minister of Education then said he was going to create a crisis, and he was true to his word. He created a crisis. Premier Harris has said himself very recently, in the last couple of months, "these teachers that are poisoning the school environment." How do you then expect the teachers to respond or to react? It must be a tough job being a Minister of Education, giving wonderful speeches out there about how we value teachers, in the same week as her leader is saying teachers are poisoning the classroom environment. It must be a very tough job for Minister of Education Janet Ecker.

A grade 4 student, Joanna, at Rousseau school in Ancaster wrote this: "In our school we had to make our own money to get our playground. Mike Harris didn't pay for it like he was supposed to. Also, we have to bring our own Kleenex to the class every week. Because of all the stuff our school has to do by ourselves, our teachers could not take the stress, so now three teachers and our school principal will leave. We also don't get that many field trips because of the strike. To get our school back on its feet, someone has to stop Mike Harris." A very smart 10-year-old wrote that.

I'd like to read, on that, an unsolicited letter from a teacher. In fact, this is not to me; this is to the director and cc'd to all of us, basically—all of the trustees, all of the MPPs in the Hamilton area.

"Dear Mr Matier,

"I have been a teacher with the Hamilton-Wentworth board of education for 13 years (nine years with Hamilton and four years with Hamilton-Wentworth). I

teach at Rosedale school and I am also the parent of a Rosedale school student. Three years ago I wrote to you, the trustees, and my superintendent expressing my disillusionment for public education as a result of the changes made to education under the current government. Our education system has become almost solely driven by financial and political factors and the ultimate goals of education have been lost.

"In seven years my teaching assignment at Rosedale school has tripled from being a physical education teacher, to teaching physical education and computers/IT, to my present teaching role teaching physical education, computers/IT, and librarian. This increase in workload has all been done within a part-time workload of 0.5 to 0.7. During this time also, Rosedale school has lost a music specialist teacher, a physical education specialist teacher, a full-time librarian, a cleaning staff member, the principal's assistant position, and has currently lost the principal position.

"When I wrote you previously I told you that 'The current situation in education has left me overworked and feeling betrayed, overwhelmed and totally devalued and unappreciated. It is "killing" my spirit.' My feelings now, after learning of our loss of the principal position at our school I liken to that of an abused individual hit over and over until they no longer feel. So ... in order to get on with daily functioning I have found myself blocking out my emotions in order to cope with these job and program losses and the fear of working without a leader. How much more can we take or have to take? We have been hit with cutback after cutback. I find myself paralyzed by the stress of this ongoing assault.

"I have difficulty respecting the public education system at almost all levels. I continue to be appalled at the lack of humanity with which changes in education have been made and which administrators in education now employ. As a result I struggle to go to work each day."

Interjection.

Mrs Bountrogianni: The member opposite citing the 10 weeks off: another example of the mean-spiritedness.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Oh, I'm mean-spirited?

Mrs Bountrogianni: Yes, it certainly is mean-spiritedness. Did this particular teacher invent the 10 weeks, when they're usually taking courses? Wait till you have kids in the system.

"It is very clear by the ongoing decisions and lack of sufficient funding of the provincial government, that it does not in practice value public education even though its mandate is 'quality education.' (It is not possible for any board to provide 'quality education' to the learner under the present terms of Bill 160.)

"I sincerely hope that those who have chosen leadership roles in education (trustees, directors and superintendents) will take the time—"

Interjection.

Mrs Bountrogianni: I've hurt a nerve. He's still rambling on over there.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member for Scarborough East will know he's not in his own seat, and if he says another word, he won't have to take it.

The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

"I sincerely hope that those who have chosen leadership roles in education (trustees, directors and superintendents) will take the time and have the courage to challenge the Harris government's attack on public education and stand up and say 'Enough already'! I would be most interested in hearing how the issue of insufficient funding and other government reform is being addressed.

"I am awaiting your reply.

"Respectfully,

"Linda Chenoweth."

I have permission to use the teacher's name. This was sent to the director of education.

I saw this too, before I was elected. There was a trickle-down effect of the sort of tough new leadership of Mike Harris: teachers had it too good. Most of the administrators were really good and treated their staff with respect, but a few took on that leadership role of Mike Harris, that new tough-leadership role, and actually would bash their own teachers, and I've seen this. I've seen this in superintendents and I've seen this in some of the even higher positions at boards across the province. It's extremely demoralizing to the really best teachers in this province and in my city when they have to wake up morning after morning and read in the paper one more insult from the government.

I have to say I've been paying very careful attention to what has been said and by whom, and it's not as much the Minister of Education, even though her policies are destructive, but it's the Premier. It seems like the Premier can't control his mouth when it comes to teachers, and I really wonder what happened to him, either in school or afterwards, for him to have this almost pathological disdain for the teaching profession. It is amazing.

2120

Mr McMeekin: You're a psychologist—

Mrs Bountrogianni: I'd have to spend more time with him and I don't want to do that. But I often wonder. Then the Minister of Education—I look at the embarrassed look on her face—has to clean up. No matter how professional and how much of a team player she wants to be, the fact that she wasn't in the loop for this tax credit was so obvious. I'm sure that many people across the way miss Ernie Eves because I'm sure he was more of a team player than their present finance minister.

Hon Mr Baird: Oh—

Mrs Bountrogianni: Well, my opinion.

Hon Mr Baird: Jim's a good man.

Mrs Bountrogianni: I didn't say he was a bad man.

The Minister of Education did give a speech in April that talked about the need for extra help being given to students who need it. I want to read a letter. I won't mention the student's name. She is in high school in my riding. This one she wrote to me May 21.

"I am writing this letter to you because of the new curriculum being enforced in our schools." This particular school is actually in Mr Christopherson's riding, but the student lives in my riding. "This is an issue that distresses me deeply and has had a significant impact on my life. I attend Westmount Secondary and the task of completing all of my courses on time has become an increasing problem. I am sure I am not the first person that you have heard this from and I probably won't be the last. This is a very common topic among just about every student these days and it is a situation that needs to be reviewed.

"All throughout my grade 9 year, difficulties with my schoolwork arose, but like all other freshmen, I overcame them fairly easily. However, even during the first few weeks of the first semester I felt stressed a large majority of the time. Now, almost three quarters of the way through second semester, my math average is a low 64% and the new civics/careers courses (if you can call them courses) are too much unnecessary work to handle. My math class consists of 31 grade 10 students and one teacher." Which, by the way, will increase by one under this new act. They're a guinea pig class.

"We were lucky enough to get one of the kindest and most qualified teachers in the school, but each student needs so much extra help that one person can't do it all." Where is this extra help that the minister was speaking of?

"Most younger classes get a 'peer tutor.' These are older students who get a credit to help the teacher and students in courses that they have a thorough grasp of. Unfortunately, the only students that are eligible to peer tutor grade 10 math are OACs and no one in grade 13 has the extra time to spare in their final year of high school. Without the assistance of a peer tutor, one-on-one help comes in two-minute segments each day. This is simply not enough. If I work hard enough to finish math by the cut-off date, I will be lucky to pass my exam. The other major difficulty that I am struggling to deal with is the current civics/careers courses. They are courses that contain some important and useful information but the way that they seem to have been thrown together at the last minute makes going to class a long, boring chore." The course is being rewritten, she says. "Until then many averages are being pulled down by the pointless, time-consuming civics/careers courses."

"In the beginning, the idea of cutting high school down to four years and making the curriculum more challenging seemed brilliant. Sometimes things are better written down. The worries about not everyone getting into the universities and colleges of their choice are virtually non-existent now. The students that are in grade 10 now will have such low marks that we won't be any competition to those a year ahead. I suggest that extra help for math classes should be provided." This is a grade 10 student. "More teachers or experienced people in the field should be hired. I realize that this would be a great cost to the government but the future of our country just might be worth it.

"I look forward to hearing a response from you."

These are three individuals who have said what you're doing is wrong.

I'd like to comment on the three-year contracts by 2004. The member for Simcoe North said, "What's wrong with that? Two boards in the province already have three-year contracts." Well, two boards in the whole province have three-year contracts. How can you get a three-year contract without knowing your budget for three years?

Mr Dunlop: Forty-four have two-year contracts.

Mrs Bountogianni: Forty-four have two-year contracts, OK. But three-year contracts, there are two in the whole province, and there's a reason for that. If you settle a contract today for three years and you don't know what you're getting, then you will be laying off teachers or you'll be laying off other staff. This is purposely done so that you can have one big strike in the fall, get it over with and have the contracts, either through arbitration or not, for the next election.

But you know, the parents are on to you now. I must admit it took a bit of time, but the parents are on to you now. And the polls are showing that the parents are on to you now. They're sick of this instability. They're sick of having to share textbooks. They're sick of having to bring things like Kleenex to school. This particular child lives in a middle-class neighbourhood. Raising the money wasn't a problem for the parents. But raising the money for playgrounds in inner-city schools is a problem. It's just not fair.

Education is supposed to be the great equalizer. You have increased the gap so that the rich can get more and more successful and leave the poor behind. But guess what? That backfires. Crime increases. Our children who have better resources will be looking over their shoulder like they do in the States when you increase the gap. That's been proven by research, and I know you all know that. And I know.

Again, I hear from the good member for Simcoe North about how much is enough. I'm really proud of the response from my colleague from Hamilton. When it comes to kids' education and health care, there isn't an amount. You have to spend what it takes. Otherwise, what's the point? What's the point of paying off your mortgage if the roof falls and kills you? Think about it.

Maybe it's because I've worked with disabled kids. Maybe it's because I was totally ashamed about being an Ontario politician yesterday when I heard about my good colleague from Flamborough's case. A seven-year-old was hospitalized 78 times for asthma. Her educational assistant isn't even there primarily for education. Her educational assistant is primarily there to keep that little girl alive. And you want a tax cut instead of giving her a chance to life and education? What's the matter with you? You're a nice guy. Think about it. Think about it.

You can't legislate kindness and you can't legislate commitment, but you can put in enough resources and you can increase morale in the system so that little girl, Emily Carrie, can be at school. You don't have to believe

us. Call her, or as Mr Christopherson says, come to Hamilton. I dare you to come to Hamilton. Come to Hamilton and talk to the parents of the disabled kids, from the low socio-economic background right up to the high middle class, who are disgusted with your government, and you will see that. You will see that next Thursday, and you will see that in the year 2003.

But what do we do in the meantime? What do we do in the meantime for these kids, these disabled children?

Another part of this new bill, actually the minister's top aim in this bill, is to make home-schooling easier, to take away a lot of the administrative sort of strife to home-schooling. As much as I think home-schooling has to be a last resort, this wasn't by accident either. You know that many more kids will be home-schooled as a result of your actions. You know that many more disabled kids who can't have an educational assistant will have no choice but to stay at home, so sure, make it easier for them. Send them the books at home. That's such a cop-out. That is so easy. Send them a little standardized test at the end of the year to see how they're doing. How shameful. When I read it, I thought, "How obvious. How transparent to actually put this in the same week as you're putting everything else in this act."

Children need to socialize. Again, it has to be extreme, rare cases where they are home-schooled. That little girl in Flamborough loved being at school, but she needed that EA. She is allergic to just about everything, and she's severely asthmatic. She needs that EA there almost like a nurse; actually, even more important than a nurse.

That is what's at the crux of this. What do we sacrifice? What do we sacrifice for these tax cuts? That is what we're sacrificing. We are sacrificing little Emily's education and possibly health care. I don't know how you're going to sleep at night if, knock wood, anything happens to her or anyone else as a result of your dinosaur policies over there.

Mr Dunlop: Increased funding is dinosaur policies?

Mrs Bountrogianni: Increased funding. You know, the mantra over there is "increased funding." I hear this all the time: "We have spent more than any other government," regardless of whatever they spent. The demographics have changed. Hello! We've got a baby boom out there that's in school now. OK? You've got a funding formula that is totally static. You have taken the trust and the power and the control out of the board. And instead of being brave enough to say, "It's centralized negotiation, and we're going to do it all," you just starve them and say, "You do it." It's brilliant, politically. Let them do it. Let the boards do the dirty work. Let the parents get mad at the board.

But the parents are on to you. They've had it. Even the Tories are coming up to us and saying, "This isn't what we voted for. My child doesn't have a space in university. My child doesn't have an educational assistant," and they'll show you in 2003.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2130.

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Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Willowdale	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Vaughan-King-Aurora	Vacant

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 premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

CONTENTS

Tuesday 19 June 2001

SECOND READINGS

Stability and Excellence in Education

Act, 2001, Bill 80, Mrs Ecker

Mr Hampton	1669, 1675
Mr Dunlop	1673, 1679, 1687
Mr Gravelle	1674
Mr Bisson	1674, 1683
Mr Wettlaufer	1674, 1682
Mr Miller	1675, 1679
Mr Agostino	1678
Mr Christopherson ..	1678, 1682, 1687
Mr Cleary	1679
Mr McMeekin	1679, 1683, 1686
Mrs McLeod	1682, 1687
Mr Maves	1683, 1687
Mrs Bountrogianni ..	1688
Debate deemed adjourned	1691

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 19 juin 2001

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

**Loi de 2001 sur la stabilité
et l'excellence en éducation,
projet de loi 80, M^{me} Ecker**

Débat présumé ajourné.....	1691
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