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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 8 October 2002

Mardi 8 octobre 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 October 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 octobre 2002

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): The hydro bills just keep coming, and the calls, letters, e-mails, petitions and postcards continue to swamp my offices. They come from places like Chapleau, Echo Bay, Dubreuilville, Hawk Junction, Blind River, Espanola, Silver Water, Batchawana and all across the north.

The rates are up again for September. The Independent Electricity Market Operator tells us that the bills through the fall and winter months will remain outrageous. Farmers, working families, seniors on fixed incomes, businesses large and small will be paying the price for the Ernie Eves electricity experiment, an experiment rushed forward by an ideologically driven government without regard for the people of Ontario.

Today I ask you, Premier: whatever happened to real rural rate assistance, a program that was long in place to keep rural rates competitive with those in the urban centres? Electricity customers in Ontario know that the Ernie Eves electricity experiment has erupted and is only causing exploding electricity bills.

My constituents want to know when this government is going to listen to Ontario consumers and provide extensions and flexibility on the payment of their hydro bills. They want to know when the Eves government plans to bring back real rural rate assistance, and they want to know when the government is going to listen to Ontario Liberals and roll out the rebate.

NORTH BAY REGIONAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I am pleased to stand before the House today to let the people of Ontario know how hard the North Bay General Hospital Foundation has worked toward raising its \$15-million goal; in fact, they've already raised \$11.2 million.

On September 24, North Bay reached a long-held dream, a dream with a bold vision for the future: the new regional health centre. This health centre is the first in Ontario to combine a state-of-the-art general hospital with an advanced mental health facility. This indeed is the way of the future.

Frank Dottori and Barbara Minogue, co-chairs of the Caring for Generations campaign, have said the health centre is way ahead of its time, and already 70% of the funds have been raised, which is extremely encouraging. It is their hope that the people of Nipissing realize what a privilege it is to have such a wonderful facility.

Our community has been presented with a unique opportunity to create a wonderful health care centre that will serve us for many years into the future. We're building the regional health care centre for the people who matter to us most: our children and our grandchildren's children.

The provincial government has committed millions to this project, but we also must commit ourselves to this vision of the future. This, after all, is the largest construction project in the history of the city of North Bay.

Dalton McGuinty and his party, the Liberals, cancelled our last hospital in the late 1980s, and we're not going to let them do it again.

PROTECTION OF PRIVACY LEGISLATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'd like to take this time today to talk about the games that governments play.

In February of this year, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services launched a comprehensive consultation on its draft privacy bill. As of August 1, the ministry received over 600 comments and submissions.

The ministry has since revised the bill and informed certain stakeholders of what the changes are. Strangely—and maybe not so strangely—my office was unable to get a copy of the revised legislation or even find out what changes have been made. We were told we would have to wait until it was introduced, but we couldn't even find out when that might be.

Why is this government so afraid to give legislation to the legislators? You've put much effort into a thorough, open-minded consultation process. You've invited Ontarians to review the draft bill and express their concerns. Particularly on an issue as fundamentally important as our privacy, we need to have all the information up front so we can be prepared for meaningful debate. We can't do that if your government is going to introduce the bill and rush it through the Legislature, as often happens. We need constructive dialogue on a bill as important as the privacy bill.

I'm disappointed you let petty politics get in the way of this particular bill.

NATIONAL DENTAL HYGIENISTS WEEK

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It is my pleasure to rise today to recognize National Dental Hygienists Week, which runs from October 13 to October 19.

I'm reminded of the famous movie line, "You want the tooth? You can't handle the tooth." Nor can dentists handle teeth by themselves. That is why today there are over 6,700 registered dental hygienists practising in the province, making them one of the largest regulated health professions in Ontario.

Over the years, the job of the dental hygienist has broadened greatly. Years ago, dental hygienists were only responsible for cleaning and polishing teeth and promoting good oral health. Today, dental hygienists not only clean teeth, but they also provide a process of care that involves assessing condition, planning and implementing treatment, and evaluation of care programs.

Today, dental hygienists are not just found in the dental practices. Dental hygienists are also choosing careers in research; public health centres, including schools and long-term-care facilities; universities and colleges; hospitals; native health care facilities; and private clinics.

As we begin National Dental Hygienists Week, we acknowledge the important role dental hygienists play in promoting overall wellness through optimum dental care. The next time you brush your teeth or flash your pearly whites, thank a dental hygienist.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): For those people who believe that the public has no influence over decisions made by agencies such as the Ontario Energy Board, the announcement yesterday that the provincial government will launch a wide-ranging review of the board's powers, including its decisions related to retroactive increases, gives us renewed hope that a massive public outcry can get the attention of the decision-makers here at Queen's Park.

In my constituency, we launched our own protest against OEB approval of Union Gas's retroactive delivery charges and the response has been overwhelming. Hundreds of letters, petitions, e-mails and faxes have been forwarded to me, and I can certainly tell all those who have participated in this democratic process that it is your outcry that got the government to act. I only hope Union Gas will respond to this review by at least suspending their collection of this delivery charge until the review is complete.

The fact is, people are absolutely fed up with unjustified increases in their utility bills. Earlier this summer, consumers were shocked to discover that the federal goods and services tax is being applied to the debt retirement charge on their hydro bills. This double taxation is unacceptable, and I was shocked that the Ontario government did not share my point of view in

that regard. While I and my colleague Sean Conway have written Finance Minister Manley asking him to remove this federal tax from our bills, I continue to believe that Ontario Finance Minister Ecker should be leading the charge on behalf of all hydro customers in this province.

As utility costs continue to rise, all our constituents must be protected against extra charges which line the pockets of government or massive corporations. People are very, very angry and they're not going to take it any more.

1340

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Since 1996, this government has removed \$1 billion from public education. We are seeing the effects of this loss in libraries, programs and closed schools and in the 34,696 children on waiting lists for special education services.

Hamilton school board trustees pleaded for years for more funding. When they ultimately stood up to this government and said they would not cut another penny from our kids' education, you appointed a supervisor to do your dirty work, to close schools and cut programs. You even left the board on the hook for the salary of the supervisor—\$166,000—and the salaries of whatever PR staff he needs to hire to put the government's spin on this disaster.

This government can't find a penny for our kids, but it can spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on bureaucrats and it can find \$1.4 million to spend on an advertising campaign to try to justify the takeover of our school board.

What if all this money could have gone to our kids? That \$1.4 million could move 360 special education students off waiting lists and into classrooms; one supervisor's salary would pay for three desperately needed special education teachers in Hamilton, or five educational assistants, or more textbooks. The list goes on.

You should hang your head in shame at what you've done to our kids. The people of Hamilton see through your plan to make this supervisor and our trustees your scapegoats. They know that the Eves government should, and will, be held accountable.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT PREVENTION MONTH

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): As a parent of five children, I'm pleased to rise in the House to note that October is Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Month. This is the 10th anniversary of the Purple Ribbon Campaign. It recognizes that we can change a child's world.

In particular, I'd like to pay tribute to the work of the Durham Children's Aid Society. Since 1905, it has been changing the world for children in our communities. Their mission statement reads as follows:

"Durham Children's Aid Society is committed to children and youth by protecting them from abuse and

neglect, strengthening the ability of their parents and families to meet their needs, and providing safe, enduring placements when they are at risk.”

Community education is also an important role for the Durham Children's Aid Society. In addition to its dedicated staff, the Durham Children's Aid Society has over 100 volunteers, who gave over 19,000 hours of service last year alone.

On Saturday, October 12, a benefit will be held at Archibald Orchards and Estate Winery, in my riding of Durham, in support of the Durham Children's Aid Society. A silent auction will assist in prevention, education and enrichment programs. Durham residents can pick up their purple ribbons at Archibald's and also at Reid's Dairy stores and many other locations throughout Durham region.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of their Purple Ribbon Campaign, I'd like to congratulate board chair Blair Walters and the board of directors. Congratulations also to the executive director, James Dubray, the staff volunteers and all those who are working hard to change a child's world, not just in Durham but throughout Ontario.

MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I rise today in recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week. Approximately 20% of Ontarians will experience a mental illness during their lifetime and the remaining 80% will be affected by an illness in family members, friends or colleagues.

Regardless of age, culture, income or education, mental illness has no bounds, and yet in the minds of many it has failed to be understood. Unfortunately there is still significant stigma, as well as discrimination, attached to mental illnesses within Ontario and across the country, which means that mental illness sufferers are often forced to remain quiet. Therefore, I stand here today and take this opportunity to draw attention to mental health issues and encourage greater acceptance and understanding of these disorders and those affected by them.

If addressed early, science has shown us, treatment can help individuals suffering from mental disorders. If given the opportunities to receive treatment, these individuals can live full and productive lives. I believe education is a valuable tool in combating and overcoming the obstacles that families and sufferers of mental illness face. Throughout Ontario's communities, mental illness sufferers need our help.

Instead of turning our backs, we must use this week to redouble our efforts to help those at risk. Today I ask all members of this House and all residents of Ontario to reach out to our neighbours, friends and families and assist in the elimination of all discrimination that surrounds mental illness sufferers. It is only together that mental illnesses can be fully recognized and overcome.

QUEEN'S VISIT TO CANADA

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is my great privilege to rise in the House today on behalf of all members to welcome here the Queen of Ontario and of Canada, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Her Majesty has come home to Canada to join with us in celebrating the golden jubilee of her coronation as our head of state.

There are some in Canada today who openly question the enduring significance and relevance of the crown in Canada. I stand in my place in this Legislature today not only proclaim my loyalty to the crown, but also to proclaim the many benefits that our constitutional monarchy continues to bestow on all Canadian citizens of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

The crown has always been Canadian as the royal thread that knitted together our country, beginning with the four original provinces to our contemporary bilingual and multicultural society. Her Majesty the Queen is related by blood to 37 royal houses of Europe and Asia, including the emperors of India and the T'ang dynasty of Tibet.

In paying tribute to our Queen, we Canadians pay tribute to our history as well as our diversity that is united in her person, as her subjects and citizens of Canada. On behalf of all members of this Legislature, Her Majesty's loyal provincial administration and Her Majesty's loyal opposition, I warmly welcome Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, Queen of Ontario and Canada, to our province. God save the Queen.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent to bring Bill 77, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act and the Child and Family Services Act in respect of adoption disclosure, for third reading.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

VISITORS

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Thank you for this opportunity. As you know, we have a wonderful group of pages with us this term. One of the pages' names is Ellen Stephenson, and her parents and two sisters have decided to come and see what a fine job she is doing today. I would ask you all if you could welcome her family.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We welcome our guests.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. All across the province, families, seniors living on their own on fixed incomes,

and businesses both big and small are getting shocked by their hydro bills.

Our offices have been absolutely inundated with calls and expressions of concern on the part of many Ontarians. We've got cases of people hit with 100%, 150% and even 200% increases in their hydro bills. Now we have learned from the Independent Market Operator that bills are likely going to get worse next year. The IMO is basically saying, "Folks, if you think things are bad now, you ain't seen nothing yet." All this, Premier, is the result of your incompetence on the electricity file.

I'm asking you on behalf of families and businesses that not only have concerns with respect to the bills today but concerns now with respect to the bills yet to come about a year from now, why is it they should trust you, sir, when it comes to protecting them in regard to their hydro bills?

1350

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): First of all, that is not what the IMO said. The IMO said that if certain things didn't come back on stream, such as Pickering and a particular unit at Bruce, there could be problems if we experience another warm summer such as the one we just experienced.

This year, during those summer months, we had to import 21% of our energy. Those two entities that I just mentioned represent somewhere between 15% and 20% of the generation capacity.

Having said that, I understand the point that the IMO makes, and that is that there must be other sources of power generation coming on stream as we go forward. That is what the open market is all about.

Mr McGuinty: It's obvious to me, Premier, that you have not taken the few minutes it would take to read the IMO's report, because it is very, very clear that you are not sending the kind of signals that should be sent that would lend some stability to the market and would be of some benefit, ultimately, to ratepayers.

First, you told families, "Look, rates aren't going to go up." Then when they skyrocketed, you said, "Well, hang on a second. We've just got to wait this thing through. Things are going to work themselves out." Now the IMO tells us that things are going to get worse because we're not going to have the necessary supply and because you haven't introduced stability into the marketplace. At the end of the day, all it really means is that ratepayers, families, seniors, and businesses both big and small are in serious trouble because of your incompetence.

I ask you again, why should ratepayers have any confidence in your ability to manage their bills for them?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, he knows that in May and June, rates per kilowatt hour were below the traditional average, and in July, August and September, they were up because of the heat of the summer. He also knows that OPG has a rebate program in place if, over the long term of course, those rates remain above the traditional average. He also knows that there are many private sector producers of electric power, such as Sither Energy, Trans-

Alta and on and on, who are investing in the province of Ontario.

Mr McGuinty: Since the Premier hasn't taken the time to look at the report that was prepared for him, I'll read him a section of it. It says, "The signals potential private investors have been receiving through the first four months of market operation may have"—and I suggest that is a very diplomatic usage there on the part of the IMO—"lacked the clarity, credibility and ... consistency required to encourage investment in new capacity." The IMO is saying that the private sector does not trust you.

We have a case of families not trusting your ability to manage their hydro bills. Businesses have the same distrust. Now the IMO is telling us that the private sector does not trust your ability to properly manage hydro in the province of Ontario.

So I ask you one more time, not only now on behalf of families and businesses, but on behalf of potential private sector investors who could help us with our supply problem, why should any of those trust you on this file?

Hon Mr Eves: Mr Speaker, he's quoting very selectively from a 140-page report.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Well, he is. The reality is we recognize the need for more generation capacity in the province of Ontario. In fact, I would say the leader of the official opposition himself, in the past, has said that a perfect system would be where we had four, five or six equal-sized producers of electricity in the province of Ontario. Ultimately, that is the goal and that's where we're going to get to.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question as well to the Premier. Today, parents and students falling within the Thames Valley District School Board awoke to some terrible news. They have learned that there are five elementary and two high schools that are on the chopping block, in small communities like Ingersoll, Tillsonburg, Sweaburg and Springfield. These schools in those communities are absolutely integral to the quality of life those communities offer.

The vice-chair of the board says the reason for closing these schools is because you haven't given them enough money to keep them open.

If there is general agreement on anything today when it comes to public education, it is that the school funding formula, as drafted by you as Minister of Finance, is badly, badly broken.

Why would you not place a moratorium on school closures until you've had an opportunity to fix your broken funding formula?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The leader of the official opposition knows full well that school boards in this province have always made decisions about building new schools and

closing old schools as the demographics of their population changed within the jurisdictions of the boards.

I'm sure he will also know that when the Liberal Party was in power, it opened far fewer new schools than our party has while we've been in power for a similar period of time.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I will draw to your attention a couple of the schools which are on the chopping block. One is Westfield in Ingersoll; occupancy, 147%. The other is Northdale in north London; occupancy, 103%. This is not a case of shutting down schools because there's a shortage of student enrolment; it's a case of a school board that feels it has no other choice than to shut down some of its smaller schools.

Interjections.

Mr McGuinty: You should know, and I'm sure the minister would be interested in listening to this, that in the States today they are moving toward smaller schools, taking a large high school, for example, and cutting it into four, because they've learned that better learning takes place in a smaller school environment.

Your broken funding formula is sending public education in exactly the wrong direction. So I'm asking you a question on behalf of those parents, those students and those communities that are about to be adversely affected once again by your broken funding formula: what are you going to do to ensure those schools stay open at least until we have the time to reverse the damaging effects of your funding formula?

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the official opposition will know that this year, \$557 million has been added to school board budgets across Ontario, probably the largest in-year number in the history of the province, bringing total spending to \$14.3 billion. He will also know that right now we are undergoing a review of the funding formula that he talks about, and Dr Rozanski will be reporting back to the government on that in November. We will take further action at that time, depending upon his recommendations.

Mr McGuinty: A couple of things, Premier. First of all, with respect to the numbers, we have \$1,250 less per student on a per capita basis today than we had in 1995, on an apples-to-apples basis. What you have committed to do is provide another \$3,500 per student in private schools. You're committing to put half a billion dollars into private education.

Why can you not agree to put a moratorium on any school closures at this time, until such time as the funding formula has been fixed? Everybody knows that repairing the funding formula is going to entail putting more money into public education. Why would you not agree that the sensible thing to do in the circumstances is delay closing any schools until we've had the opportunity to fix your broken funding formula?

Hon Mr Eves: Which Dalton McGuinty are we listening to today?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: I know you don't want to hear this, but you're going to anyway.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Come to order. The Premier has the floor.

Hon Mr Eves: Is this the Dalton McGuinty who on November 3, 1998, said, "Well, you know, um, schools close and schools open on a fairly regular basis," or the Dalton McGuinty about whom it was said on September 4 of this year that he "does support the closing of schools, but only in the natural order of things," according to an Ancaster News interview with you? Or is it your education critic Gerard Kennedy, who, as reported by the St Catharines Standard on February 4, 2000, made no promises that schools wouldn't be closed under his party had it been in power, but said it would have been "less likely, in his opinion"?

1400

HYDRO RATES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Last week you said we should wait a year to find out if hydro privatization and deregulation is working. This week, your own hydro market surveillance panel says we don't have enough hydro. The private sector hydro you boast about isn't happening. Your own panel says that skyrocketing hydro bills will continue along with the serious risk of brownouts and blackouts next summer.

Premier, why are you putting our economy at risk by fiddling for a year while the lights go out and people's hydro bills continue to increase?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): First of all, the leader of the third party will know that there are private sector developments going on now with respect to future generation.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Name names.

Hon Mr Eves: "Name names," the honourable member from St Catharines says. I'm glad you asked me that question, because we can read them off here.

First of all, we know we have to get Pickering and Bruce A nuclear back on stream. Those are two very significant generators of power in Ontario. He will also know, if he read the IMO's report, that they point out the fact that because of the unusually warm summer, combined with the fact that one unit at Bruce was down for two months of the summer, we had to import 21% of the power used in those two months this summer. That is not an everyday or even an every-year occurrence. We don't have the warmest summer on record every year. It's been the first one in the last 50 years, since 1955. That won't happen every year, and he knows it. We have Sithe Energy, TransAlta, Calpine, Imperial Oil and on and on, all investing in Ontario to produce more electricity next year, the year after and the year after that.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you go out there and try to convince people across this province that our summers aren't getting warmer and then read your own report, because it says this private hydro that you boast about isn't happening, that it won't be here next summer and it

won't be here in the summer of 2005. It's not happening, Premier.

But what is happening—and the panel refers to this—are several examples of gaming the hydro market. You know what that is. That's what Enron did in California when they ripped off consumers to the tune of billions of dollars. Your own panel says there is a risk now of that happening in Ontario. Premier, do you want to go the way of California? If you don't, stop this hydro privatization and deregulation fiasco now, because even your own people say you've got it wrong.

Hon Mr Eves: That is not what the IMO report says. What the IMO report says is that if new power generation isn't brought on stream as we go forward, and if we have yet another record summer—it can't be the worst one in 50 years because, according to you, we have one every year. What happened to 2001? That must have been a record. You said every year, any idiot knows, we keep on getting progressively warmer. Then 2001 would have been a record, not 1955. This was a very unusual summer.

I know you travelled around the province on your bus, and I'm glad to see that you're starting it up with diesel fuel again to go around the province some more. Last time in your journey around the province you encouraged people not to sign fixed-price contracts. Now you're up in the House screaming and yelling because you encouraged them not to sign, they didn't sign and now the price of their contracts is very volatile. What are you going to do on your bus tour this time, Howard?

Mr Hampton: Here we have the confession. The Premier of Ontario doesn't believe global warming is happening. The Premier of Ontario believes that what he should offer people is a choice of an increase of 75% in your hydro bill or 40% in your hydro bill. That's all you're offering people.

Premier, I'm telling you, step back from the precipice and recognize what is happening. Reviewing the Ontario Energy Board is not going to deal with all the things that have happened since you brought hydro privatization and deregulation to the province. Learn from the lessons of elsewhere, from California, Alberta and Montana, where they now want to reverse deregulation and privatization. Will you join me and the 80% of people across Ontario who've gotten on board the public power bus, who don't want private, deregulated hydro? That's what they want you to do. Will you do it?

Hon Mr Eves: No, I won't join him on his bus as he goes on his next tour of the province of Ontario.

During the entire five-year mandate of the Bob Rae government, the NDP brought on-line a grand total of 1,400 megawatts of power. That's what they did about taking care of this problem in five years. Since we have been in government on this side of the House, just since 1998 we have commitments to the province of Ontario to bring on board 10,103 megawatts of power, compared to the 1,400 you brought on in five years. We understand what needs to be done, we are going to do it and in the end we are going to have a much better system of free

enterprise in the province of Ontario and lower power prices for generations of Ontarians for many years to come.

MUNICIPAL POLICE SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of Public Safety and Security. Some very disturbing things are happening across rural Ontario in terms of policing. In my constituency this summer, between the city of Kenora and the city of Dryden, 15 people died on the Trans-Canada Highway. One of the allegations that has been raised by people is that there were not enough OPP officers. In another community in my constituency, people felt so strongly that they asked for a meeting with the OPP detachment commander as to why there was not enough OPP coverage in the community.

This is happening in many places in rural Ontario, yet at the same time we hear about not enough OPP officers to patrol the highways or to patrol communities, the OPP is taking over more and more municipal police forces. Do you think it's appropriate that the OPP take over more and more municipal police forces when we hear from community after community that there aren't enough OPP officers on the highway to do the job they have now?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): I don't accept the basis of the question with respect to the OPP bidding on contracts to provide policing in municipalities across the province.

The reality is, they do go through a costing and bidding process, with the municipalities retaining—if they opt to have OPP service provided, they are, in effect, hiring a certain number of officers to police that community. They have to meet the minimum standards as set out by the province of Ontario through our adequacy regulations.

I'm not sure where the member is going on this question, but the reality is that they have a certain number of officers approved. That is all reviewed by the Ontario Civilian Commission on Police Services with respect to meeting the standards of the province of Ontario in terms of public safety.

Mr Hampton: Minister, on September 20 you quietly announced an independent review of the disbandment of municipal police forces; no press release, no announcement, just a quiet announcement of a review. But at the same time, you're allowing the process of municipal disbandment of police services and OPP takeover to continue. If you ordered the review and you've got communities from across this province like Harriston and Minto, the chief of police of Kingston, the 15 people who died on the highway in my constituency this summer—if you announced the review, why are you allowing this process to continue? It seems to me that logically you should be saying, "If there's a perceived problem that warrants a review, we should not be allowing any more of these takeovers to happen." Wouldn't you agree?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think it's wise for any government policy to be reviewed on a regular basis. That's certainly the view of this government. We made changes with respect to policing in a significant way a number of years ago. There was a guidebook with respect to the costing process that was developed and agreed to by all the partners in policing. I think it's appropriate and timely that we review that process and ensure that over the past five years there have not been changes with respect to how this should evolve. If there are indeed changes, we will address them.

I have a great deal of difficulty with this member getting up here and expressing concerns about policing in Ontario. The reality is that this government put 1,000 well-equipped, well-trained new officers on the streets of communities in Ontario. What did that government do? They put 5,000 angry officers on the front line at Queen's Park.

1410

EMPLOYER HEALTH TAX

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier of Ontario. I have in my hands a cabinet document. It's another shocking example of you putting your friends ahead of the public interest. In this cabinet document it says that your government gave the Toronto Blue Jays and other professional sports teams \$10 million. You created a loophole to cut their employer health tax payments by as much as 50%. This happened in April and you didn't tell a soul. Not a single release was sent out by your office or by the Minister of Finance to announce your decision to subsidize Carlos Delgados's salary.

Premier, given the needs of our health care system today, could you please explain how other Ontario businesses are forced by law to pay all of this tax? How can you possibly justify a double standard for your friends?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Finance must have an answer to this.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): This government is always prepared to help individuals and organizations in terms of making sure people are competitive and prosperous. I'll be very pleased to look into the comments the honourable member has made to assure her that nothing untoward has occurred.

Mrs Pupatello: I find that quite an interesting answer because actually it was the Minister of Finance, in November 1998—that would be today's Premier—who argued the opposite. What he said in a court of law against a business in Ontario was what the minister argues the contrary. He was suggesting absolutely, in law, that these people would have to pay all of the employer health tax.

I go back to the original question to the Premier. The Toronto Blue Jays don't need a tax cut, the Raptors don't need a tax cut, the Maple Leafs don't need a tax cut. You know this but you gave them \$10 million anyway. You

took \$10 million from what would go into our health system, where people are waiting 12 weeks for a mammography test in this province, and you're handing it to professional sports teams. You must be embarrassed by it because you didn't tell anyone and we had to go and find it in an order-in-council document. Apparently, your caucus doesn't even know.

I ask you again, Premier, why the double standard? Why do you help your friends when the balance of Ontario businesses have to pay all of their employer health tax?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I've already said to the honourable member that I'd be quite happy to look into the situation. If the facts are as they usually are when they're coming from the opposition, I can assure her she has nothing to worry about. But we'd be quite happy to look into it.

This is the government that has given individuals \$11 billion in tax relief. This is the government that has cut taxes for small business, tax cuts that the opposition, the Liberal Party, is promising to reinstate. They're going to increase taxes on our small business sector, the sector that produces the majority of jobs in this economy. That is the record of the opposition party. Our record is quite clear.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture and Food. As all of us in this House are aware, this week marks the fifth annual Ontario Agriculture Week. It's an excellent opportunity to recognize the tremendous contribution Ontario farmers make to our communities and our economy.

Farmers in my riding of Perth-Middlesex and across the province were extremely busy this past summer producing high-quality food for consumers here and around the world. I understand that our government has also been productive in providing the agricultural industry with some much-needed support. I also understand from the agricultural leaders I've met, some as recently as this morning, that in your role as Minister of Agriculture and Food you've been working as hard as those farmers to ensure that agriculture is given the support it needs. Minister, I would like you to inform the Legislature of some of our government's recent efforts to support this important industry.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I'd like to congratulate the member for Perth-Middlesex for coming forward with agriculture week so that the Legislature is cognizant of the things that are going on in agriculture. This is the fifth anniversary and he has done a terrific job.

We have a number of initiatives that we've been working on with farm groups over the summertime. The Premier was good enough, at the International Plowing Match, to announce \$72.5 million, which is the 40% of the transition funding that needed to go out as investment to our agricultural community. We have those dollars ready to go. They should be out by the end of the month.

And we are very optimistic that the cash the industry asked us to put forward will be needed and well utilized.

We also must say that in July we worked with the federal government in a consolidated effort to try and ensure that we had a program that spread the dollars we already had in the market revenue and NISA programs even more fully and the agricultural community was happy—

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

Mr Johnson: Minister, thank you for the summary. You've indeed had a busy summer and a very productive one as well.

As I talk to farmers—

Interjections.

Mr Johnson: I can understand why the Liberal caucus doesn't believe in listening. I believe that yesterday they showed their true colours to the farmers of Ontario in not supporting your bill.

As I talk to farmers in my riding of Perth-Middlesex, the message is clear. Our government has been there to support agriculture and food industries and the rural communities which rely on those industries. Minister, what priorities will the government be focusing on agriculture during the coming months?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me say that there are a number of agricultural issues we've been working on on this side of this House. As everyone is cognizant, the Premier led a round table in June. We've been following forward on that. He said at the time that it was very important to hear from the agricultural community and react and work with the agricultural community, and we have been doing that.

The Minister of the Environment and I have been out talking to the agricultural community and the environmental community about the nutrient management plan, and the first regulations are out and available to the agricultural community. In fact, we have had a good response from the first two regulations, and we have another set coming out shortly.

Thirdly, as I said earlier, the Premier announced the risk management tool for the province of Ontario in September. It has been well received and I think it shows that this government has a positive attitude and is there to help the agricultural community in Ontario because we know that this is a very important business that needs to have longevity and needs to provide us all with the great quality of food that is made in Ontario.

EMPLOYER HEALTH TAX

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier, and I'd like an answer to this question. Could you please explain to the House how you can justify \$10 million to professional sports teams in Ontario, by giving them a loophole in the employer health tax so that monies that should be going to the people we brought to you in this House last week, people who are waiting for diagnostic services, people who are waiting too long for cancer services—those are the

people—so that you can give the money to your friends, people like Ted Rogers, Paul Godfrey? These are the individuals who are involved with professional sports, like the Maple Leafs, like the Blue Jays, like the Raptors. Please explain to this House how you rationalize a tax loophole for your friends, but the balance of Ontario businesses have to pay the entire employer health tax.

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I wish the honourable member would tell me what date I supposedly have done this, because I have absolutely no knowledge of what she's talking about. There hasn't been an OIC that has gone through cabinet that says what she says it does since I've been Premier. I became Premier, in case you're interested, on April 15 this year.

1420

Mrs Papatello: Premier, in November 1998 you were the Minister of Finance. You're the one who argued that all businesses in Ontario must pay all of the employer health tax. The date on this cabinet document is after you were elected Premier and after you began getting briefings from the Ministry of Finance. You knew about this, and you did nothing. This was signed by another Minister of Finance. You were the Premier. You were the elected leader, and you had already received briefings. I want you to explain why we can do without \$10 million in the health system.

Hon Mr Eves: I know she'd want to do the honourable thing. I now have in my possession a copy of the order in council, and I know why you won't answer the question. Because the date is April 2 of this year, two weeks before I became Premier of the province. It did not happen while I was the Premier. Stand up and do the honourable thing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. We've got a little bit of carrying on.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): In the east members' gallery we have a former member, Mr Jordan, who was a member of the 35th and 36th Parliaments. Please join in welcoming our honoured colleague.

It is now time for a new question.

TOURISM AND AMATEUR SPORTS FUNDING

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): My question is to the newly appointed Minister of Tourism and Recreation, the member for Oak Ridges. I know you are just getting briefed on your portfolio, but I know you are aware of the fact that tourism is a vital and fast-growing business in Ontario. In fact, many small businesses and businesses in general in Mississauga—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. We need to hear the question. Members can't carry on conversations across. Sorry, member for Mississauga Centre.

Mr Sampson: I was explaining to the minister, who is probably getting briefed now, that many businesses in Mississauga, the area I represent, and frankly throughout Ontario live and breathe the business of tourism, attracting people to Ontario from other jurisdictions, most notably the US, to do business here in the province.

We are trying to help that as a government. We have been doing that for some time. In fact, you have a fund that allocates monies to help attractions attract people from other jurisdictions to come to the province and come to Mississauga. Could you help us understand a little bit more about how you do that, how that works and how that helps Ontarians in general?

Applause.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I think I'll enjoy that while I can. I want to say to the Premier, this has been a long time coming, and I thank you very much.

The member from Mississauga is absolutely right: tourism is a vital industry in our province. Some 425,000 jobs depend on it, some \$16.8 billion in revenue to our province. I look forward to assuming a leadership role in this industry. I am aware that post-September 11 there have been some challenges to this industry. Our government believes we must do what we can to support this industry. We are expanding our October program. We are providing some additional marketing support to this industry. I look forward to working with all stakeholders in this industry over the next number of months to truly bring Ontario into first place in tourism in North America.

Mr Sampson: Minister, you will know that part of your ministerial responsibility is to deal with the area of sport and recreation in Ontario. My colleague from Mississauga West and I are very strong supporters of recreation and sport in Mississauga. In fact, it's probably well known around here that I do actively get involved in supporting youth hockey as much as I can because I believe that's an important part of how youth develop in this province.

But helping communities support sports facilities is another important feature, I believe, of your ministry. In fact, this government has been very active in supporting things like renovations to recreational facilities in places like Mississauga, where we received a very much needed \$5.6 million to renovate hockey rinks and other sports facilities in the city that needed that work. I know; I've been there, and many of my son's hockey parents have been there as well. Tell us more about those programs, because they are helping Ontarians.

Hon Mr Klees: I'm pleased to speak to that. In fact, the sports aspect of this ministry is one of the areas that I'm particularly excited about. I too have a background in sports, and I believe that there is much more that our government can do to help amateur sports and to help sports in general.

The kind of support the member refers to—I too have been involved in my riding in announcing these kinds of grants—there will be a continuation on the part of our government to support this kind of event.

I will be in London this coming Saturday, where we have contributed some \$2.5 million to an arena there. There will be many thousands of people celebrating that kind of initiative that this government has provided.

We continue in this government to believe in amateur sports. We'll do, under my leadership, what we can to advance that.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Premier. Premier, today adopted adults, birth parents and adoptive parents are here to protest your government's refusal to call Bill 77 for third reading. We want to thank all of the members from all three parties who have shown their support today and at other times.

Premier, my bill, as you know, is about human rights. It's about healing unnecessary pain and suffering. It's about saving lives. A recent study found that 77% of Canadians support such legislation. The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies supports Bill 77. The majority of your own caucus supports Bill 77.

I'm calling on you today to call Bill 77 for third reading and a final vote. Will you do that?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm sure the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services can respond.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I thank my colleague across the way for the question. This is a very important issue. We are concerned about this issue from the point of view of the adoptees and also that of the birth parents. We particularly understand the concerns about the access to medical records and the want, quite frankly, to know one's background.

Having said that, I do find it interesting coming from my colleague across the way who, when in government, had a seven-year waiting list for adoptees to find information about their parents. We have made tremendous changes on this side of the House since taking government in 1995. With an investment of \$2.4 million, we have changed that seven-year waiting list to one of only three months. So now individuals are able to find access to their records in a much easier and more comprehensive way.

Ms Churley: Premier, I'd like to come back to you. That was an outrageous answer. It was members from your party at that time who filibustered and stopped that bill from going through. Here we are all these years later. The gallery is filled with people from the adoption community who don't want to hear any more excuses from you, Minister.

I wonder, Premier, do you know that adoptees cannot access their own medical history until after they show symptoms of a fatal disease? Current laws make it im-

possible for adoptees and their children to take preventive action. People are dying as a result of these outmoded laws.

Dr Philip Wyatt, chief of genetics at the North York General Hospital, says that current adoption disclosure laws put the health of more than 300,000 Ontarians at risk.

Premier, this injustice has got to stop. Will you at least promise to take a look at the bill, have a discussion with me and the adoption community, and bring it in for third reading? Will you do that, please?

1430

Hon Mrs Elliott: I would like to thank my colleague across the way for the question. I was merely pointing out that our government has made a number of changes to try to respond to this very serious issue.

I also must point out to my colleagues here in the Legislature that there are some very serious privacy issues that must be addressed in order to solve this problem. There are still some outstanding concerns with regard to those privacy issues. Until those are addressed, I think it's not appropriate that we move forward.

Having said that, I have indicated to my colleague across the way that I am most prepared to work with her and with any colleagues in the House to address those concerns so that all feel their privacy concerns are protected.

EMPLOYER HEALTH TAX

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier. We have reports in the media that you received briefings from the Ministry of Finance warning you of shortfalls in the budget projected April 1. You had briefings as a Premier-elect before you—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Would the member take her seat.

Order. We'll have to ask the people to leave. I would ask all the members in the gallery to kindly—we would like them to be able to stay. I do not want to have to remove everyone, but I will if indeed there are any more outbursts. I would ask all members to think of that. We've got people who have travelled to visit here and I do not want to have to clear the galleries, but I will have to if we have any more outbursts.

I apologize to the member for Windsor West.

Mrs Papatello: Premier, we know you had briefings from the ministry a week before this order in council was signed on April 2. Yes, you were the Premier. You are suggesting today that perhaps you didn't know. Our question is, we kind of wonder what else escaped you in all of that time period, or what else you rushed to push through before your official April 15 swearing-in.

I want to ask you today what's really important here, and that is, are you prepared to rescind this order in council and put \$10 million back into the Ministry of Health?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Speaker, through you to the honourable member of the opposition, sarcasm will not help this situation. The reality is that in any briefing I had as the leader-elect of my party or of the government, while there was still an existing Premier—and there was a Premier; his name was Michael D. Harris—he was the Premier until April 15. You may not understand that, but you should, being a Liberal. You have a Prime Minister in Ottawa who says he's going to leave 15 months from now, but he still is the Prime Minister today.

I have never been told about this issue—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Don Valley East, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Eves: I had no knowledge of this issue until it was raised in the Legislature this afternoon. I have never been briefed on this issue, nor do I know why I would be if I was given a briefing about the general financial situation of the province of Ontario.

Mrs Papatello: My question has not been answered, and it's the most important question about this issue: that is, if you are prepared to rescind this decision, if you think it's fair that people should have mammograms on time, that they should get cancer treatment on time, or should the Toronto Raptors buy bobble heads with Ontario taxpayers' money? That ultimately is the question that we are putting at your feet, Premier. We want to know, just out of interest's sake for you. This decision, signed by your cabinet members, Premier, is retroactive to 1999.

Hon Mr Eves: The member for Windsor West stood up in this House no more than 10 minutes ago and said that I was the Premier when this was signed. She has now totally obfuscated that. She doesn't have the class to stand up and withdraw and apologize.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could the Premier take his seat. The member for Windsor West, come to order, please. She has asked her question; it's now the Premier's turn.

Hon Mr Eves: To the member for Windsor West, she might want—talking about hypocrisy, sarcasm and integrity, I presumed that she was going to stand up today, or her leader was, and table his receipts for the last seven years, and every one of his 48 staff members for the last seven years. I know you'd want to do the right thing. Where are they? I don't see them.

HOME CARE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question today is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and it's to do with home care. Minister, I know that our government has made significant investments in home care in Ontario, and I know this funding is making a real difference in the lives of people across Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member take his seat. I apologize.

The member for Windsor West, this is your last warning. If you continue on, I'll have to ask you to leave.

The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka may continue.

Mr Miller: I'll start again, just in case the minister missed my question. It's to do with home care, and it's for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know that our government has made significant investments in home care in Ontario. I know this funding is making a real difference in the lives of Ontarians across the province. Many of my constituents would like to know more about our commitment to the care of our loved ones in the event of serious illness.

Minister, can you reassure my constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka that they will be able to receive the care they need at home?

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the hard-working member for Parry Sound-Muskoka for the question. The Ernie Eves government recognizes the challenges that families face when a loved one becomes seriously ill, or in any circumstance where they need medical support at home. That's why we are providing home care through community care access centres in our province. It is a major priority for our government.

The fact is, our government provides the most generous level of home care in all of Canada, approximately \$128 per capita, and it's something we're very proud of. We do this at no additional cost to families. Across Canada, six of 10 provinces charge co-payments for personal care as well as homemaking services. Sometimes up to 12% of the cost comes directly out the patient's pocket. Fortunately, that isn't the case here in Ontario.

Mr Miller: I thank the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for that response. I'm sure these investments go a long way in providing quality care to Ontarians who need it, and greater peace of mind for families and loved ones.

Perhaps the associate minister could provide for this House some idea of how far we've come since 1995, and how we plan to ensure that the care is there for our growing aging population.

Hon Mr Newman: Again I thank the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka for his question.

Our government has worked hard over the years to help provide accessible home care services for the people of Ontario. Indeed, since we were first elected by the people of Ontario in 1995, we've increased home care funding by nearly 70%—an increase of nearly 70%. I think it's important to remind this House that those investments in health care were done without any dollars coming from the federal government. They are beginning to realize now that we as a government have made major investments in home care across the province.

I say to you today, Mr Speaker, and to the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, that the Ernie Eves government will continue to work with our partners to help

provide our seniors and in fact our most vulnerable with the highest-quality health services as close to home as possible.

1440

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Premier. Premier, the headline tells what's happening: "Ambulance Dispatch a Mess." In Niagara, we have had a terrible time with ambulance dispatch service. People have died because ambulances are not getting to the position of the patient on time. Your government kept hidden for several months a condemning report that said low pay, frequent turnover of staff, antiquated equipment, improperly trained staff, work overload and lack of knowledge of the street system have resulted in a real mess in ambulance dispatch service.

The regional municipality of Niagara, in exasperation at not getting answers from your government, has now offered to take over the service, with the appropriate compensation from your government. Will you now solve this problem by turning responsibility over to the regional municipality of Niagara for ambulance dispatch in Niagara and end these deaths and unnecessary delays?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I believe the Minister of Health has the response.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I can certainly inform this House on the state of things with respect to the honourable member's question. The regional municipality has suggested verbally to me on a couple of occasions that they wish to put together a business case for the very plan the honourable member mentions. I have indicated to the regional chair that I'm interested in her submissions on this issue. I have not received anything in writing to date, but I understand they're working very diligently on a proposal.

Mr Bradley: All of this dithering and business cases and correspondence back and forth aren't doing anything for the dispatch service.

Let me give you one example. I personally know of four people, two who are today dead and two whose conditions were very bad as a result of the ambulance taking a long time getting there. I know of a myriad of other cases where the ambulance simply isn't going to the right place because the people dispatching don't know where to send the ambulance, and for the other reasons I mentioned.

Here's a person I know personally, or did know personally. On August 18, a 44-year-old man was at a party in Port Robinson when his car accidentally disturbed a wasp nest. He was stung several times and suffered an allergic reaction. A friend dialled 911 and was connected with the ambulance dispatch centre. The centre sent an ambulance from the Rose Avenue ambulance garage in Welland even though an ambulance and paramedic crew were ready at the much closer Thorold South garage on Allanburg Road. Given the geography of Welland and

the alignment of their streets, the ambulance from Rose Avenue had to travel south to find a way across the canal. I have little to say now, but it took the ambulance 18 minutes to get there. This person died as a result of that allergic reaction.

Others have died. Others have experienced genuine problems with health because of the ambulance dispatch service. Will you now do as the region asks, turn over responsibility to the region and end this mess?

Hon Mr Clement: I am aware of the facts of the particular case the honourable member has mentioned and I offer, as I have offered, my condolences to the family and friends of this individual. I also should inform the House that there is a coroner's investigation going on and we all anxiously await the results of that investigation.

I should mention to this House that on August 20 of this year, the Ernie Eves government and I, acting on its behalf, announced \$32.5 million toward enhancing emergency health services: \$29.5 million of that to maintain and improve ambulance response times, which was the tenor of the honourable member's question, and \$3.3 million going in particular to enhance ambulance dispatch centres. This is an issue this government feels strongly about and the Ernie Eves government has in fact acted.

MEDICAL SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care as well. Health care remains the number one priority with Canadians and Ontarians. This government, through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, has aggressively put in place new initiatives designed to increase enrolment in medical schools in our great province.

In our province we are blessed to have many outstanding universities offering students outstanding programs, including world-renowned medical schools. Minister, can you kindly inform the House of the new medical school spaces across the province that are a result of this government's commitment to providing Ontarians with the best possible delivery of health care services.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I certainly thank the honourable member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for the question. Indeed, my honourable colleague is quite correct that the government is making great strides in investment in our province's medical schools. For instance, there are currently 692 students enrolled in Ontario's medical schools. This is an increase of 23%, or 160 new positions since 1999.

As an example I take the University of Western Ontario medical school. There are currently 133 first-year students enrolled in its medical school and this represents a significant increase since 1999. I'd also reiterate the Ernie Eves government's commitment to

providing northern Ontario with its very first medical school, set to open in 2004. That school will be the home to more than 50 first-year medical students, and that is certainly to be applauded as well. Some of these will be in Thunder Bay and some in Sudbury. They'll be taught in both locations as well as throughout the north, and this will mean greater access to medical care.

Mr Gill: Minister, yesterday I heard a member from the third party question the minister about the international medical graduates who wish to practise in Ontario. As my wife is an international medical graduate and I was not born in this country, this is a very important issue to me.

My great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, like this whole province, is home to many new Canadians. Many of these immigrants have medical training and experience from their former countries and wish to ply their trade right here in Ontario. I wish to ask the minister what initiative our government has taken to ensure these international medical graduates are able to practise in Ontario.

Hon Mr Clement: I can say for the record that unfortunately the former NDP government did nothing in this area, and indeed it was their former leader Bob Rae who admitted, and I'm quoting exactly now, "I was part of a political consensus that proved to be wrong." That's as close as you get to an admission of culpability from the former Premier.

In the last two years this government has had a new international medical graduate program that has more than doubled its number of positions to more than 50, and since its inception over 400 international medical graduates have completed the program. We also have a program where underserved communities requiring specialists can sponsor foreign-trained physicians in the IMG program and have the physicians set up their practice in their sponsor community following their graduation. This will mean that by the end of this year, more physicians will be available to more of our underserved communities. This is another example of the Ernie Eves government repairing the damage of previous governments.

EMPLOYMENT IN STURGEON FALLS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Premier. The community of Sturgeon Falls awoke this morning to find out that their only employer, Weyerhaeuser, is going to be closing its doors on December 6. Is your government prepared to work with the union and the community in order to find a successor employer to take over that mill in Sturgeon Falls?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): We're always prepared to work with anybody on such issues. I will ask the minister of industry and trade to talk to the appropriate people. But you have to understand that there are only so many things that government can do, of course.

Mr Bisson: Premier, it seems that your government can do a lot more than you profess, because part of the issue here is that Weyerhaeuser is closing down its corrugated box plant in Sturgeon Falls and they're going to be operating their hydro dams. They've suddenly come to the conclusion that there's more money to be made in producing power as a private operator in Sturgeon Falls than there is in operating a plant that employs some 140-odd people.

Part of the issue here is that your own government policies are making it easier for Ontario firms that have hydro generating facilities to say, "Rather than operating a plant that employs 140 people, we can make as much, or more, money operating power dams in Ontario."

Are you prepared to back off your deregulation and privatization and allow the community of Sturgeon Falls to keep that plant going?

Hon Mr Eves: I refer the question to the minister.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): I heard about the Weyerhaeuser closing today. I did not have advance notice of that. I understand that a number of jobs are involved. It's a matter of significant concern. The company, as I understand it, is concerned about the age of its plant and increasingly competitive global markets.

I'll certainly be prepared to talk to the member about it, get his information about it and get in touch with the company.

VISITORS

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'd like to welcome Bob, Susan and Andrea Gallagher to the gallery. They are Carley's dad, mom and sister from Peterborough.

1450

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I have a petition that is signed by over 1,083 constituents in my area.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid for by" senior citizens "and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities by 15% or \$7.02 per diem effective August 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this fee increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable" citizens "more than \$200 a month; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the increase in the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own funded study, Ontario ranks last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

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

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce his 15% fee increase on seniors and the most vulnerable living in long-term-care facilities and increase provincial government support for nursing and personal care to adequate levels."

I sign my name to this petition with enthusiasm and pass it over to Rachel, my page.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have hundreds of signatures again on adoption disclosure. These petitions read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in Ontario, adopted adults are denied a right available to" all "non-adoptees, that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin;

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

"Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information; permit birth parents ... and siblings access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18; permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children; allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a contact veto restricting contact by the searching party; replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling."

I affix my signature to this petition once again, because I am in full support.

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 771 people, which I wish to present on behalf of the member for Oak Ridges.

“Whereas on August 13, 2001, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care introduced a number of changes to the delivery of audiological services in Ontario, including the delisting of funded hearing aid evaluations and re-evaluations and the restriction of access to diagnostic hearing tests which have had adverse effects on the deaf and hard of hearing community,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“To reinstate delisted audiological services, including the assessment and reassessment of hearing loss, and to remove access barriers for consumers to the audiological profession in Ontario by considering alternative hearing testing capacity as recommended by the physician service committee and a new funding mechanism as recommended in 1998 by then Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer.”

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is part of a 20,000-name petition on Highway 69.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

“Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

“Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

“Whereas the Harris-Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

“Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of a government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Eves government has failed to do so;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease.”

I give this to Philippe, our page from Sudbury, to bring to the table.

HOME CARE

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): This is a very unique petition I’m presenting today on behalf of my constituents of Durham.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the undersigned, support the philosophy of caring for the elderly, the handicapped and the infirm within their homes and communities wherever possible;”—I support this—“and

“Whereas caregiving by paid professionals in the home is not always the preferred choice of family members; and

“Whereas we believe in some circumstances it is more reasonable and compassionate for the government to use the money assigned to professional caregivers to support those very family members who would prefer to remain at home to care for their relatives; and

“Whereas caregivers who work outside the home often carry an extra burden of guilt and anxiety when they leave their loved ones in the care of strangers while they go about their work;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide financial support to those residents of Ontario who choose to remain with their loved ones and care for them at home. And we respectfully ask that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and any other relevant ministries give full consideration to developing legislation and policies to support caregivers who care for their relatives in their homes” in their time of need.

I’m pleased to sign this petition on their behalf.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ernie Eves Conservative government has legislated the opening of the Ontario electricity market as of May 1, 2002, and the price per kilowatt hour for electricity in the province of Ontario has nearly quadrupled since May 1; and

“Whereas Ernie Eves has done a poor job in educating the public as to the ramifications of an open electricity market in the province of Ontario and has done little to punish the unscrupulous sales practices of door-to-door energy retailers; and

“Whereas the government appointed the board of directors for Hydro One who approved exorbitant salaries and compensation packages for Hydro One executives;

“Be it resolved that the Ontario government move immediately to protect our province’s electricity consumers by addressing the serious generation problem in Ontario, by punishing unscrupulous electricity retailers and by moving forward with a rebate to offset the increasing costs of electricity in Ontario.”

Since I’m in favour, I sign my name to this petition.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Conservative government increased fees paid by Ontario seniors and other vulnerable people living in long-term-care facilities by 15%, or \$213 a month, instead of providing adequate government funding for long-term care; and

“Whereas the Conservative government has therefore shifted the costs of long-term care on to the backs of the frail elderly and their families; and

“Whereas this increase is 11.1% above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas in 1996 Ontario abandoned its minimum requirement of 2.25 hours of nursing care per nursing home resident; and

“Whereas the government’s own contribution to raise the level of long-term-care services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

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“Whereas according to the government’s own study, government cutbacks have resulted in Ontario seniors receiving just 14 minutes a day of care from a registered nurse—less than half the time given to residents in Saskatchewan; and

“Whereas the report also found that Ontario residents receive the least nursing, bathing and general care of nine other comparable locations;

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

“Join the Ontario New Democratic Party in demanding the Conservative government eliminate the 15% fee increase for residents of long-term-care facilities, increase the number of nursing care hours for each resident to a minimum of three and a half hours per day, and provide stable, increased funding to ensure quality care is there for Ontario residents of long-term-care facilities.”

I join my constituents in putting my name on this petition as well.

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): We have been overwhelmed with petitions from constituents angry about the Ontario Energy Board’s approval of the Union Gas retroactive delivery charge. I will read some of them.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Energy Board has consented to allow Union Gas to retroactively charge \$40 per month for a three-month period to recover additional system operation costs that occurred during the winter of 2000-01 totalling approximately \$150 million;

“Whereas Union Gas will recover accrued costs over the peak heating season, causing undue hardship;

“Whereas this retroactive charge will affect all customers who receive Union Gas, including new homeowners and new customers to Union Gas;

“Therefore we demand that the Ernie Eves government issue a policy directive under section 27.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act disallowing the retroactive

rate hike granted to Union Gas; and we further demand that the Legislature examine the Ontario Energy Board, its processes and its resources, and make changes that will protect consumers from further retroactive rate increases.”

These were sent to me from all across my constituency. These particular ones are from Thunder Bay, Dorion, Nipigon and Red Rock. I am very pleased to sign my name to these petitions and certainly will continue to present them to the Legislature.

CHILDREN’S HEALTH SERVICES

SERVICES DE SANTÉ POUR ENFANTS

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): « Attendu que le gouvernement conservateur planifie la fermeture du service de chirurgie cardiaque à l’Hôpital pour enfants de l’est de l’Ontario...;

“Whereas the Conservative government plans to centralize all cardiac services for children in Toronto;

« Attendu que la chirurgie cardiaque ... est un service essentiel pour les enfants de l’est de l’Ontario et pour les enfants francophones de toute la province...;

“Whereas the lives of children may be at risk if forced to travel to Toronto for cardiac care;

« Et attendu que les enfants et leurs familles se verront imposer des dépenses et des soucis inutiles s’ils doivent se rendre à Toronto pour recevoir des services cardiaques...;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Conservative government halt immediately its decision to close cardiac surgery services at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa.”

C’est avec plaisir que j’y appose ma signature.

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Energy Board has consented to allow Union Gas to retroactively charge \$40 per month for a three-month period to recover additional system operation costs that occurred during the winter of 2000-01 totalling approximately \$150 million; and

“Whereas Union Gas will recover accrued costs over the peak heating season, causing undue hardship; and

“Whereas this retroactive charge will affect all customers who receive Union Gas, including new homeowners and new customers to Union Gas;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Ernie Eves government issue a policy directive under section 27.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act disallowing the retroactive hike granted to Union Gas; and we further demand that the Legislature examine the Ontario Energy Board, its processes and its resources, and make changes that will protect consumers from further retroactive rate increases.”

This petition is signed by a number of residents of Chatham and the Merlin area. Like all these petitions, I have affixed my name to it.

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Some more petitions on Highway 69, a part of the 20,000-name petition that we are submitting from Sudbury. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it says:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

"Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

"Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

"Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of a government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the Harris-Eves government has failed to do so; and

"Whereas 46 people have been killed on Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound in the last three years; and

"Whereas already this year 10 people have died on that stretch of highway between Sudbury and Parry Sound;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Eves government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease."

Of course, I affix my signature to this petition, and give it to Philip, our page, to bring to the table.

OPPOSITION DAY

EDUCATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have an opposition day motion which reads as follows:

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses Excellence for All, the Ontario Liberal plan for education, which will raise standards and guarantee better results, lower class sizes, increase access to quality child care and keep students in school until age 18.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr McGuinty has moved opposition day number 1. The leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I rise with a great deal of pride and pleasure to speak about a plan which, I can tell you, our caucus has worked long and hard on. It has to do with improving the quality of education delivered to Ontario

children. It's as simple as that. It is something for which there is, I can say, a huge appetite today in the province of Ontario. It doesn't matter who you talk to; most people have come to understand intrinsically that there is something fundamentally wrong with the public education we are offering our children today, and people want to know what it is that we can do about it. So, unlike members of the government, we over here are not focused on meeting the needs of our friends or finding ways that we can advantage ourselves through government; we are focused on bringing about substantive and measurable improvement in public education in Ontario.

I can tell you off the top that our plan is ambitious, because we believe that we have to be ambitious when it comes to meeting the educational needs of our children. I can tell you that it is aggressive, because we think we have to be aggressive when it comes to reaching out for our young people. It is also very practical and very workable. It is based on much of the work that has been done here in some of our schools in Ontario as well as some of the very best experiences we have learned about in other parts of the world.

One of the things I want to talk about at the outset with respect to our plan is that it does something that no other plan of its kind has done in the history of this country: we make a specific commitment—in fact, we are offering a guarantee—that there will be measurable improvement in student achievement by the end of our first four-year term of government.

The results today are nothing less than sad when we take a look at what has happened when it comes to the standardized test results in the province of Ontario. After seven years of Tory government reforms in Ontario, our children are left in the unfortunate position where only half of them are meeting the basic standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

We are so confident in our plan, so determined to make a difference in learning for our children, that we are guaranteeing that by the end of our first four-year term of government at least 75% of Ontario students will meet that basic standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

In order to get there—because that is a very ambitious goal that we have set for ourselves and, more importantly, for our young people—obviously we have to put in place the kinds of conditions that will enable our children to learn better than they are doing today.

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So we would start at the very beginning. I am very proud of this particular component of our plan. It's all about bringing early childhood education into the 21st century, helping it to come of age in Ontario.

Science has told us for a long time now that the early influences that are brought to bear on a child from the age of zero to three, zero to four, have a profound influence on the ability of that child to succeed later on in life, academically and simply as a caring and productive citizen. What that means is that it's important for us to give every child in Ontario access to early childhood education. If we get the early years right, the child is set

for life. If we get the early years wrong, then of course that becomes a very expensive proposition for our society, to say nothing of—and this is the single most important loss—the loss of potential of that particular individual child.

So we, as part of our plan, have created something we call the Best Start plan, and it's all based on our vision for early childhood education in Ontario. Our vision is quite simply this: we think that early childhood education should become an integral part of public education in the province of Ontario; that every public school should offer early childhood education; that every public school should offer parenting support programs of one kind or another; that every public school should be seen as a community hub which links our early childhood educators in the community together and provides ongoing support.

In order to achieve that vision, we have to take it step-by-step. The first step is the one that we have outlined in our plan which we are calling Excellence for All. The first step on to our Best Start plan is the following. We are going to dramatically improve accessibility to quality, affordable, early childhood education in the province of Ontario. In fact, three quarters of all Ontario families with a child under the age of four will become eligible for our Best Start plan. We're talking about 330,000 children. That's a 450% increase over the number of children today in Ontario who are eligible for supports for early childhood education.

In order for a provider to be eligible under our Best Start plan, that provider would have to do three things. The provider would have to first register with the plan and, secondly, have to undergo a simple background check. Thirdly and most importantly, that provider would have to participate in ongoing education, ongoing training in early childhood education, thereby benefiting not only the provider but, most importantly, the children who have come to spend the day with that provider. So that is talking about what we need to do at the very beginning.

The next thing that we will do within traditional public education is reduce class sizes from junior kindergarten through to grade 3. We've got an average class size of 25 today in the province of Ontario. We would provide for a maximum class size of 20 in the early years, JK through to grade 3, kids between the ages of four and eight. Why that is so important is because children in larger classes tend to be overlooked. Their individual problems can be overlooked. They can fall through the cracks, so to speak. We are going to ensure that our children have the individual attention that they need in order to succeed.

Things are so bad today in Ontario that there are over half a million kids in classes of 26 or more. That is unacceptable and parents will tell you in countless cases today that their children, whether they are fast learners or children who are having difficulties keeping up—in both instances they are crying out for more individual attention for their children. Studies tell us that kids who get more individual attention in the early years, JK through to grade 3, tend to perform better academically, not only

in those years but throughout their elementary, high school, college and university years of learning. It makes a huge difference.

After we have dealt with smaller classes, we also believe that we should have more and better training opportunities for our teachers. One of the untold stories connected with teaching today in Ontario is the staggering number of teachers who are leaving the profession in the early years. Estimates are as high as 30% in terms of the number of teachers who quit within their first five years of teaching. We simply cannot afford to lose young teachers. We're already challenged by teachers leaving at the earliest possible opportunity. We've got to close the door at both ends by making it more attractive for teachers to stay in Ontario and continue to teach here.

One of the things we have to do upfront is to provide for teaching mentors. These are experienced teachers who will have some time made available to them so that they can devote it to spending time with young teachers. I can recall a particular time chatting with a young teacher in a Toronto schoolyard, who said to me, "There goes"—we'll call her Mrs Smith—"Mrs Smith. She's a very experienced teacher, having taught for some 25 years." The young teacher said to me, "You know, I would give anything just to spend a day or two at the back of Mrs Smith's classroom, to learn from her because she's such a good teacher." We have to create more opportunities for our young teachers to continue to learn. To use some of the jargon, what we've got to do is turn public education into a learning organization. You can't just finish teachers' college, then go into a classroom and stay behind your closed door and teach your students day in and day out. There have to be opportunities for you to learn and constantly hone your skills so that you can become a yet better teacher.

The other thing we're going to do, I am proud to say, is something we've talked about before, but it's included in our Excellence for All plan. We're going to have a program called a lighthouse program. A lighthouse program is all about ensuring that some of the very best practices that are extant in public education today, some of the great things that are happening inside our public schools today, are shared with other schools.

Let me give you an example. I visited St James High School in Guelph. I met there with a young phys-ed teacher. His name is Steve Friesen. I went to see him because it turns out he's got the highest rate of enrolment in phys ed in the province. I went in and I said, "What the heck are you doing that makes young people want to attend phys ed in your school?" He's seen such dramatic improvements, he's taken his rate of enrolment from 20% to 60% and he's taken intramural participation from 60 students to 1,200 students.

When we're thinking about this kind of thing, we should think about growing rates of childhood obesity in Ontario. I think of my own four children between 16 now and 21, who spend far too much time either sitting in the classroom, in front of TV or in front of a computer. We

have to find more opportunities for young people to become physically active.

There are some wonderful things that that young man has done in that school which, by the way, didn't cost that school one extra penny, which we should be sharing with other schools around the province. Our lighthouse program would provide some additional funding to that school in order for that school to share that best practice, for example, to free up Steve Friesen to go spend a bit of time in some other high schools, for them in turn to acquire that experience and for them in turn to share with others. That way we can make success contagious within the public education system.

Another thing we want to do as part of our Excellence for All education plan is to provide for the creation of turnaround teams. Turnaround teams will be given the special responsibility to help out schools that are struggling. Some of our schools are falling behind for a variety of reasons that are both endemic to their milieu but, most importantly, because we've got a government here that doesn't care, that's writing them off. One of the fastest-growing education industries today in Ontario is private tutoring. It's no wonder, because our public schools aren't getting the level of support they need in order for all of our children to succeed. Those schools that are struggling would be provided with some assistance by some people who are expert educators and administrators, who would go in as part of a turnaround team, meet with the administration and teachers and prepare some kind of a plan on the ground with them to bring about better improvement in learning and in teaching that takes place at that school. This is not by any means an effort to punish schools that may be experiencing some difficulties. It's a genuine effort to reach out and help schools that might be falling behind.

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We believe our public education system and individual schools must be accountable. We believe that individual schools should be inspected on an ongoing, regular basis, but we also believe that a school should be compared against itself. What we should be looking for is improvement year over year. We will do whatever we have to do to ensure the necessary supports are there.

The other thing we are very proud to include as part of our plan in Excellence for All is learning until 18. As you know, we've got a law on the books today in Ontario that's been around for I'm not sure how long, 50, 60, 70 years maybe, that says that when you reach 16, you can quit school. I'm sure even the young pages here involved in grades 7 and 8 understand the importance of completing high school, of going on as far as you possibly can in education in order to find success in life.

What we're going to do is require that all young people continue to learn until reaching the age of 18. There's an exception: if you happen to graduate from high school before that time, then you're no longer required to be in an official learning environment, although obviously we would strongly encourage you to go on as far as you possibly can. We're saying to all those thou-

sands and thousands of young people who have traditionally dropped out of high school, "We're not giving up on you. We need you. Our economy needs you. It's very important for us that you be able to achieve your greatest potential, whatever that might be."

So we are going to create a new, meaningful high school diploma that marries the traditional classroom experience with learning outside the classroom; for example, in a co-op or apprenticeship program. That way, we are convinced we will create the kind of learning experience that is simply not there today and that will make it much more attractive for young people to stay in school. Don't get me wrong: I'm all for rigorous standards, but I understand that kids aren't standard. That's the important distinction we have to draw in our minds.

My oldest, Carleen, is in third-year university. She's very adept when it comes to the arts—history, English, languages and the like. My son is in first-year sciences. He's an expert when it comes to numbers. My third is absolutely superb when it comes to Nintendo and Gameboy. The point I'm making here is: different strokes for different folks. Public education must be able to ensure there are different pathways for young people to find success. It's not a question of reducing standards. It's a way of ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of pathways that recognize the differences in our young people. That's what it's all about.

Of course it's very important to us as Liberals that our schools be a safe learning environment for young people, so part of our plan is to ensure we have safe schools. We're going to require that schools offer anti-bullying programs. We'll require there be a school safety hotline in place so that young people, parents and anybody who feels they have information they want to share or a question they're maybe embarrassed to put in the school environment itself can do that with the confidence of knowing it will remain anonymous through our school safety hotline.

One of our intentions, given that we are so ambitious for public education and for our young people, is to ensure we are doing much more than simply churning out good workers. Of course we want good workers. It's a knowledge economy. We understand that the best workers get the best jobs at the best pay and enjoy the highest standard of living and make the greatest overall contribution to our levels of productivity.

That's great. We want that from our schools, but we want more than that. We want good citizens. In order to get good citizens, these are young people who have to be exposed to a well-rounded education. So we believe that good public education in Ontario at the beginning of the 21st century means that, in addition to numeracy and literacy skills, young people have to be exposed to music, art, phys ed, drama and the full range of extracurricular activities which make for, at the end of the day, a well-rounded education. Our commitment to public education is going to guarantee that the young people of Ontario are exposed to a well-rounded education.

I know this is not going to be an easy thing to do. I understand that. My youngest, Connor, is in grade 11. At the beginning of the year I said, "Are you taking phys ed?" because Connor is a real computer nut. He's on the darn thing all the time in his spare time if he's not at his part-time job. He said, "I don't have any time." I said, "Let's take a look at this stuff together here." Once we factored in all the subjects that he had to take in order to be able to go on to meet the entrance requirements for certain university programs, he was right. There was no opportunity within the curriculum as it exists today for him to take a bit of phys ed or, had he wanted to, a bit of art, music or those kinds of things. I think that's a real problem.

One of the things we are going to do in order to be able to better address this problem is we're going to create a brand new body. I think it's high time that we have done this in Ontario. It's called a curriculum council. I want to give credit where credit is due in this regard: I got this idea from Gerard Kennedy, my education critic, who has been very active on the education front.

The curriculum council would actually consist of front-line people—teachers, principals and others—who would be given responsibility for planning and implementation of curricular changes. Right now, curriculum—and I say this, I think, with respect to all governments of all political stripes—can become a bit of a toy for the political ideology of the day. It causes tremendous challenges for teachers, to say nothing of what it can end up doing to our young people if there has not been an independent body in place that understands government retains the right to give policy directives with respect to curriculum, but then has a profound understanding of how it works inside the classroom and then is given specific responsibility for planning and implementing curriculum changes. We'll be calling upon our new curriculum council to help us ensure that our intentions are given the force of life; that is, a well-rounded education with opportunity for exposure to all those kinds of things I just talked about, which we believe are essential at the beginning of the 21st century if we're going to have a progressive education system.

We're going to do something as well under the Excellence for All plan which, given recent history, will be truly revolutionary. We're going to respect and support Ontario's teachers. It should hardly be revolutionary, but sadly it is. I have just talked to too many teachers—and these are young people filled with a powerful sense of idealism—who have decided to go into teaching because they just want to make a difference in the lives of young people. That is pretty powerful motivation, but we've put them into such a corrosive environment it has robbed them of their idealism and it cannot help but have an impact on our children.

We intend to support and honour our teachers. We intend to put in place greater and better learning opportunities for our teachers. I've heard from too many young teachers who have told me independently that they

are embarrassed in a social setting to admit they are teachers in Ontario. Think about it: it's a knowledge economy and those people who impart knowledge to our children in too many cases are ashamed to admit they're teachers. There is something fundamentally wrong there.

To relate another personal experience, my youngest sister, a teacher, is teaching in Germany this year. She taught there last year, and for a couple of years before that she taught in the United Arab Emirates. She comes home at Christmas and she comes home for summer.

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When she first told me she was leaving, I said, "There's no darn way you're leaving. You're a good teacher. Your principals told me that, your kids' parents have told me that and I can see it in the eyes of your students. Don't you appreciate everything the province has done for you?"

She said, "Yes, I do, but I'm not sure my province appreciates everything I'm doing for it." She tells me that when she's over there in other parts of the world where she has been teaching, when she tells people that she's a teacher, they put her on a pedestal. "You impart knowledge to our children. It's a knowledge economy. How can we help? You're important to us in our society and to our kids." We have to restore that sense of honour to the teaching profession. That's not only the right thing to do for our teachers, but it's the right thing to do for our kids, ourselves and our society. We look forward to doing that.

Some people ask, "I understand you're going to put \$1.6 billion into public education as part of your plan. Where are you going to get the money?" That's an important question. First of all, let me say that when we talk about putting money into public education, it has to be seen for what it is: it is an investment. Enlightened self-interest demands that we see it for what it truly is. It is an investment that will pay off not only for young people but for all of us. It's an investment in a brighter future, a healthier, more prosperous economy, a better and more productive citizenry, strong workers, and on and on and on.

Investing in our Excellence for All plan will simply come about by virtue of the fact that we have different priorities than this government. This government wants to put half a billion dollars in private schools. We think that is nothing less than shameful. We think that with public education on its knees, if there is a penny available for education in the province of Ontario, it ought to be invested in public education.

This government wants to put another \$2.2 billion into tax breaks for large corporations. We disagree with that policy. We will rescind that tax break, and instead we will have that money available for our priorities, including public education.

We will also ensure that all savings found within public education are reinvested in public education. For example, with the elimination of grade 13, the OAC year, that's going to free up some hundreds of millions of dollars. Unlike this government, which would waste that on tax cuts, we would reinvest that in public education.

There also happens to be a terribly wasteful, bureaucratic exercise connected with assessing special education children which is costing \$50 million a year. We would eliminate that program. We would vest that assessment responsibility in those people on the front lines, teachers and people who work with the boards, and we would rely on their best judgment. We will fund accordingly and audit occasionally on behalf of taxpayers—we do believe in accountability—but we will free up that \$50 million and make that available for investment in public education; more specifically, to ensure that the needs of our young people who have special learning needs are in fact being met.

The other thing that we're going to do in government is finally make my private member's bill, twice introduced in this Legislature—we're going to make it law. It's a bill that is going to ban the use of taxpayer dollars for partisan, political advertising. So far, this government has spent over \$250 million—that's a quarter of a billion dollars—on wasteful partisan political advertising. It's time to bring that to a grinding halt and make that money available for good public purposes, like public education.

I have said it many times over, but if I could stand for nothing else as Premier, I would stand for education. I happen to believe that if you get education right, most everything else seems to line up. Young people who receive a good public education turn out to be the best workers, the best citizens. They take responsibility for the welfare not only of themselves and their families but of their communities. They tend to be healthier.

So much can be founded on public education, and that's why we, as Liberals, are so committed to supporting public education. That's why we, as Liberals, are so ambitious for our children. That's why we provided a specific guarantee of measurable improvement. That's why we're bookending public education the way it should be bookended today in the early 2000s, starting with early childhood education and continuing with learning right through to 18.

I have had the opportunity to talk about this a great deal through talk radio and a variety of speaking opportunities, and people are very excited about the fact that there is a political party that is genuinely committed to public education for all the right reasons. So I commend this to you, Speaker, and I commend this to those of our viewers who have had the opportunity to learn more about our plan, Excellence for All. They can always get a copy of this plan through our offices and through any of our MPPs. It's an exciting plan. Public education does not have to be the way it is today. There is a way for us to turn it around and ensure that all our children have a bright and prosperous future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased to participate in the debate today so I can highlight the NDP's bright idea for \$10-a-day child care in Ontario. Speaker, you will know that that proposal comes as an integral component of our document, A Brighter Idea for

Education, which we released the day that school started in September. We do recognize that education is lifelong, so we need to invest in the earliest years of our youngest and we need to invest right through to adult education.

We do accept that what Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain had to say in the Early Years Study was that ages zero to six are a crucial part of learning and of children's development and that what we teach to children in the years zero to six will either equip them or deprive them of the very skills they need in order to meet the rest of life's challenges.

The regrettable fact is that this government has yet to accept that basic fact and reality, and instead has spent much of its time undercutting and undermining the very programs we need to support early learning. For example, this is a government that cancelled the 12 Early Years projects begun by our government and slashed funding for junior kindergarten and made it voluntary for school boards to provide. This is a government that cancelled funding for full-day kindergarten. It's a government that has cut regulated child care funding by 15%, thus putting many of the early learning programs in regulated child care at risk and also leaving Ontario families with the highest cost of child care in the country. This is a government that has left many families, both full fee-paying families and families looking for subsidies, on a waiting list.

When we shortchange our kids, that is really short-sighted. When we invest in early learning programs, that really pays off for everyone. Above and beyond the work that McCain and Mustard did, you can look at a 25-year study called the Perry Preschool Project that was done in Michigan, which tracked younger students right through to age 25. It showed that every dollar that had been invested in education in the early years saved \$7 in the form of lower dropout rates of those students, a lower social assistance rate, a lower crime rate. You only have to look at that to understand why Ontario should be adopting a comprehensive plan to support families in the early years. That is what occurs in our document.

I want to go through some of our proposals for the viewers who are watching today. First, our plan says very clearly that we will invest in junior kindergarten and senior kindergarten, we will make JK and SK full day and we will fund school boards in this province to make that mandatory so they can deliver that for parents.

We also very clearly say, with respect to the child care portion of early learning, that we want to do a number of things. First of all, which is pivotal, \$10-a-day child care for parents whose children are currently in regulated, not-for-profit settings, ages two to five. We do that because we know that 55% of parents in this province pay full fees. Those families deserve to have a break on their child care too, not just families who make under \$25,000, as is proposed in the Liberal plan. If you're going to make child care affordable and accessible, you've got to deal with child care costs for those who are paying full fees.

1540

Those who are paying full fees in this province are paying the highest full fees anywhere in Canada. We know that child care costs in this province have increased 62% since 1997. We want to do something for those parents, middle-income parents, even if the two of them are working. We want to do something for their fees too because we want to make sure their children have access to a high-quality early learning program as well. That is a model that has been adopted in Quebec, where parents, regardless of where they live, regardless of their income and whether or not they're in the workforce, are entitled to have child care at \$5 a day. The government picks up the cost.

We think that our model of \$10 a day will make child care accessible for all Ontario families, not just those families who earn less than \$25,000, and will be much more in keeping with what Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain have said: that early learning programs should be accessible to all families—not just high-risk families, not just low-income families—in Ontario. That's why we're going forward with the proposal for \$10-a-day child care: \$10 a day paid by the parents, the government of Ontario picking up the rest of those costs.

If you look at the next proposal, that has to do with the creation of new spaces. I look back at what our government did. We created about 18,000 new child care spaces during our time in government, over that four-year period. So we think it's quite reasonable to say to the public that we believe we can create 20,000 new \$10-a-day spaces in the first mandate of the government.

Those spaces would be created in not-for-profit home- and centre-based care—not for profit. That's a clear difference between our plan and the Liberal plan as well. We are not interested in supporting the for-profit child care sector. We have had a long policy in our party that supports not-for-profit child care. When we were in government we followed that and it is our intention, in our document and with this plan, to ensure that those spaces that are created, those spaces that move down to \$10 a day, will be in not-for-profit centres and not-for-profit regulated home settings.

Municipalities can participate in that in the creation of 20,000 new \$10-a-day spaces, we certainly anticipate that the municipalities that now pay 20% of subsidized spaces would actually use some of the money they have on hand. In Toronto it's some \$3 million right now. The city of Toronto would then add on to the \$10 a day to reduce the fees even further for those parents if it decides that they need some subsidized spaces out of the 20,000 new spaces.

So the municipalities have an important role to play. We know the city of Toronto has set aside, for at least three years now, \$3 million to add new subsidized spaces. We say to the city of Toronto, "You can participate in this plan. We will ask you to add your subsidy to the \$10 a day that those parents are now paying. You can reduce that even further and ensure

there will be parents who will only continue to pay \$2 or \$3 if that's all they can afford."

The third piece of this is that for those parents who are already receiving a subsidy, whether it's \$2 or \$3 a day, and that's about 45% of all parents who use regulated child care in the province right now, we are going to maintain those subsidy levels. So if they're only paying \$2 a day, that's what they're going to continue to pay under our plan. If they're paying \$3, that's what they're going to continue to pay under our plan.

We recognize that there are many people who can't afford to pay more. However, those who are receiving a subsidy under the current subsidy system deserve to have that subsidy system reviewed. We know that this government particularly has made it very restrictive for parents who are trying to return to school to actually get a subsidy. We are saying very clearly that if you already have a subsidy, we will continue to maintain it. There will be a full review of the current subsidy system to make it less intrusive and much more fair, especially to those parents who are trying to access education themselves at either the college or university level.

We also made it very clear in our document that we want to change the education funding formula so that schools that have child care centres are not penalized for having those centres. Under the changes this government made to the Education Act, child care spaces in schools can't be counted as education space, so we've had the scenario where many schools have gotten rid of their child care centres because they couldn't afford to maintain operations in their schools under the funding formula. So we will be amending the education funding formula so that child care space in schools will again be counted as education space for the purposes of school funding. That will make it much easier to increase new spaces in school-based settings.

If you go back to the Mustard and McCain report, you see clearly that one of their focuses was to have early learning centres in schools. If we amend the education funding formula—and we are the only ones proposing to do that—then schools again will have a very clear incentive to have child care centres in their facilities. We also will be making a change, as we did when we were in government, to say that all new schools built will have to have child care centres in those new schools.

Let me deal with capital funding, because our plan, again, is the only one that talks about capital funding and an investment. We know that this government, for the last seven years, has not had capital funding for child care centres—not for renovations, not for new child care spaces etc. We propose to change that. When we were the government we did provide capital funding for the creation of new schools and for the renovation of others. Our plan talks about capital not only to repair those existing centres that have had a very difficult time because there hasn't been capital funding from this government, but there will be funding as well for new child care centres. We hope that much of that would be

used for renovations in schools to allow those new spaces and new centres to open in schools.

Let me speak about staff as well, because we are not going to have a high-quality system of child care if we don't do something about the level of pay for staff in regulated child care. This is a government that has capped proxy pay equity to child care workers since December 1998 and has forced regulated child care centres to find within their own budget, through fundraising or raising fees, the money necessary to pay proxy pay equity. When we introduced proxy pay equity, our government paid proxy pay equity to non-profit agencies that provided child care and we will do that again because we know that non-profit centres are having a very difficult time trying to meet that commitment right now. In fact, many of them are closing because they can't meet it.

The other thing we need to do is deal with wage enhancements, because this government has frozen wage enhancements for child care workers since they have been the government. Our government increased wage enhancements by \$40 million when we were the government. We doubled the pay that was going to some of the lowest-paid workers in the province of Ontario. This government has frozen enhancements. In our plan, in our document for early learning, we are committed to dealing with that very serious problem and increasing the pay of child care workers. So there will be wage enhancements once again provided to not-for-profit child care centres and centre-based care under this plan.

We also know that family resource programs which don't offer, most of the time, non-parental care are very important access points for any number of families where moms are staying at home and where moms are looking after child care directly themselves. Our plan also calls for an investment in the existing family resource program network in the province of Ontario so that we can expand that system. We have to have in place the supports, the important early learning programs for any number of parents who make a decision to stay at home, not work and not require care. If they don't want to require care, we should have in place those community-based agencies that will deliver high-quality parental training programs, nutrition programs, breast-feeding programs etc. So our plan also calls for an investment in family resource programs, the existing network in the province of Ontario.

I mentioned the full-day JK and SK and funding for school boards. Unless we provide school boards with the actual funding to make that happen, they are not going to have the programs. We have seen that in the last number of years where it hasn't been mandatory to have those programs and where the government hasn't provided targeted funding for JK and SK. If we are going to do that—and we believe that's a critical part of early learning—then we've got to put the money on the table and provide that to school boards so that it can be done.

If I look at the importance of our plan, I think that we have a very comprehensive plan for early childhood development. I think it's one that supports Ontario families'

access to early learning wherever they live, whatever their income, whether they are working or not. It makes an important investment in high-quality regulated child care in the non-profit sector in particular, because we know that non-parental care is absolutely critical to early childhood development.

1550

One of the major and outstanding criticisms that has come in the second report that has been released by McCain and Mustard, a report called *Early Years Study Three Years Later*, and I'm just going to read on page 31:

"The need for expanded quality non-parental care surfaces in all reports generated in the community and was identified as a need in the Early Years Task Group interim report. It is not possible to implement early childhood development programs in the 21st century without also providing non-parental care. In Ontario the majority of preschool children (more than 70%) live in two working-parent families or in lone working-parent families. In view of the socio-economic changes in today's societies, referred to at the beginning of the report, it is not possible to develop effective child development and parenting programs that do not also include non-parental care including respite care."

That's what our plan is all about, and that's what we want to do. My colleague Mr Marchese is going to be very specific about where the money is going to come from to do that, although I can tell you in this piece that we have always said that this government should use a significant portion of the federal ECDI money that it receives to support regulated child care and family resource programs. The government received \$114 million last year from the federal government for early childhood development and didn't spend a penny on regulated care. The government received another \$152 million April 1 of this year and I suspect didn't spend a penny of that on regulated child care either, although the minister has refused to provide us with a list of what the money was actually spent on.

In conclusion, let me say we've got a comprehensive plan. I think it makes child care accessible and affordable for all parents in Ontario, not just parents at lower incomes. We think \$10-a-day child care is a bright idea whose time has come.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, I am very pleased to have this opportunity today to speak about how our government continues to make progress in our efforts to strengthen public education in Ontario, to build upon the existing strengths in our schools and focus our efforts on constant improvement which benefits students. Surely that is the goal or should be the goal of all members of this House.

First of all, I want to introduce two guests who are in the gallery today just by coincidence who have joined us here. Louise Ervin is the president of the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, and she is joined by Carol Devine, who is the director for public affairs

and media relations. I would ask all members to welcome these two individuals to the House this afternoon.

As of this September, the province-wide standardized curriculum is in place for every grade, and our last class of OAC students will graduate at the end of this school year. These are the most obvious examples of an education system that has changed fundamentally over the past seven years, not without issues and challenges but also with many successes and achievements.

When our government was elected in 1995, we made a key promise to Ontarians. We promised to reform and improve Ontario's education system, to make it more equitable, more responsive to students' needs and more accountable to parents and taxpayers. We are keeping our promise.

Our government's comprehensive plan to reform the education system and improve student learning and achievement is helping to ensure that all our students, regardless of where they live in the province, are educated in an effective, safe and respectful learning environment.

We have established a new curriculum from kindergarten to the end of high school that sets a high standard for student achievement and excellence. We have introduced province-wide tests that report regularly on how successfully students and schools are performing. We have developed strategies that respond to test results, such as the early reading strategy and the early math strategy, to help our students gain the fundamentals for success in future learning.

We have introduced a number of initiatives to ensure the safety of our students in our schools, and we've put in place a comprehensive program for teachers' ongoing professional development to ensure that they have the most up-to-date skills and knowledge and are able to apply these effectively in the classroom. This plan is working. Student achievement is improving.

It's essential that we continue to build on these steps, and we are doing so. Within two days of being sworn in, Premier Eves demonstrated that education is a clear priority for his government. He announced that \$65 million more would be given to school boards for new textbooks and technology-based learning materials. Two weeks later, the Premier and the new Minister of Education, the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, announced that \$25 million would go toward expanding the early reading strategy and introducing a new early math strategy. Two weeks after that, our government committed to increasing funding for Ontario's schools by \$350 million for the upcoming school year. Last June's provincial budget built further on this investment and announced another \$117 million in new funding for Ontario's schools.

If you add all of that up, since April, our government has announced \$560 million in new spending for Ontario's schools and school boards. This school year, Ontario will be spending a record \$14.26 billion on publicly funded education. That's a 2.9% increase over 2001-02. Almost all school boards will receive more money, even though more than half of them will have

fewer students. This significant increase means that our schools will have access to more of the resources and tools that they need to provide a quality education to students. It means that Ontario's students will benefit from greater learning opportunities.

As well, four years ago our government introduced a student-focused approach for publicly funded education. The purpose of student-focused funding is to ensure quality education and equality of opportunity for all students, no matter where they live in the province of Ontario.

While the funding formula has accomplished a great deal, Ontarians have also told us they want improvements where possible. Our government has listened to these concerns. In the throne speech we announced that Dr Mordechai Rozanski, president of the University of Guelph, would lead the Education Equality Task Force in a review of the funding formula. Dr Rozanski is carrying out his review in several stages, and he has been gathering input through stakeholder meetings, public consultations and submissions on the best way to fund school boards.

It's also worth noting that the requirement for individual school boards to balance their budgets has been part of Ontario's education system since 1933. Despite the fact that our government has put more money into the system and responded to concerns about the funding formula, this fall three of Ontario's 72 school boards unfortunately refused to live up to their financial and legal obligations. The government acted to bring stability to the education of children in these communities by sending in investigators to review each board's finances and to assist the boards in meeting their financial obligations to ensure that the schools would be open in September for students. When the three boards refused to consider the investigators' advice, our government's responsibility was clear. Supervisors were appointed to prepare and implement a plan to return each board to a balanced financial position.

Another important objective we've been addressing is the provision of effective student accommodation. Currently, Ontario's school boards own and operate about 5,000 schools, with some 250 million square feet of floor space. The total value of these facilities is estimated to be more than \$25 billion. Within our funding formula there is provision for a pupil accommodation grant. This annual grant gives school boards both the resources and the flexibility to operate, maintain and upgrade existing schools and to build new schools where they are needed.

In May, the Minister of Education, the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, announced that the grant for school renewal would be \$241 million for 2002-03. In the budget, an additional \$25 million was added, for a total of \$266 million. We also committed \$6.5 million toward replacing nine schools that were identified as having unfeasible repair costs. A further \$17 million will be invested over two years to assess school renewal needs across the province and to identify the most pressing investment priorities.

Our government understands that in reviewing and maintaining Ontario's schools, we are not only protecting an important public asset, but we're also ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment for our students. A healthy learning environment also includes ensuring that our young people gain the knowledge and learn the skills that they need to be successful. In today's competitive world, it is our responsibility as a government to prepare students for the challenges of the future by setting high standards of achievement and providing the support they need.

Parents across Ontario told us they wanted a more rigorous curriculum with specific, clear and consistent standards province-wide. Again, we responded. From the new kindergarten program through the elementary grades and to the new high school program, the new curriculum focuses on the basics of reading, writing, math and science, and on helping students acquire the knowledge and skills they will need for the future.

1600

The new curriculum has met with considerable success. Provincial, national and international results show that our students' knowledge and skills are improving. However, we are also aware that some students need extra assistance to master the higher standards of the new curriculum, and we are committed to helping them.

For 2002-03, student-focused funding will flow a projected \$496 million to boards to help these students, including over \$293 million through the learning opportunities grant, which includes \$25 million for grades 7 to 10 literacy and math programs; more than \$168 million through the language grant for English as a second language; almost \$16 million through the language grant for French-language students; and over \$18 million through the continuing education and other programs grant for such programs as summer school.

A number of education stakeholders have expressed concerns that the new high school curriculum for applied courses may be too challenging for some students. Our government is fully committed to finding ways to ensure that students who are struggling get the support they need so that they too can experience success. The ministry will be working to address these issues with education partners in the coming year. We will be seeking ways to ensure that students obtain the skills they need for employment and post-secondary opportunities.

I mentioned a moment ago that test results show Ontario students are responding positively to our new curriculum. I think it's important that I elaborate somewhat on that point.

Regular assessment of progress and learning the curriculum is a key part of the government's plan to improve student achievement. We all need to know if the education system is providing the consistency and quality we all want for our children. Ontario students are now regularly assessed in reading, writing and math in grades 3 and 6 and in grade 9 math. During the last school year, the grade 10 literacy test was administered for the first time as a requirement for high school graduation.

The results of provincial, national and international tests all continue to provide evidence that our students' knowledge and skills are improving. For example, the latest results of the grade 10 literacy test show that 75% of English-language students who wrote the test passed in both reading and writing. This is an improvement from 68% last year. Sixty-seven per cent of French-language students who wrote the test passed the test compared to 54% last year. Ontario English-language grade 3 students reaching the provincial standard in math increased from 43% cent in 1998 to 61% in 2001, while French-language grade 6 students meeting the provincial standard in math rose from 55% in 1999 to 60% in 2001.

Students, teachers and parents are all to be congratulated for these significant achievements. These results make it clear that our government is succeeding with an education agenda that focuses on students, on learning and on results. Province-wide tests are a valuable tool for determining where there are problems and how we can best address them to help students.

Last year we learned that only 49% of grade 3 students were achieving the provincial standard in reading. In response, we launched the early reading program to improve the reading skills of children from junior kindergarten to grade 3. To support this strategy, the government invested \$29 million. In May our government announced that we would invest \$25 million to expand the early reading program to grade 6 and establish a new early math strategy to help raise the level of math achievement of students from JK to grade 3. In the budget, our government announced a further investment of \$5 million in 2002-03 to extend the early math strategy to the grade 6 level, and to enhance the teaching skills of elementary school teachers in this area.

Our government is also moving into phase two of the support for schools that need extra help program, a component of the early reading strategy that provides additional support to a select number of schools to improve the reading performance of grade 3 students.

In the fall of 2001, 16 schools were selected by a steering committee, with input from local school boards, to participate in phase 1 of the program. Last week, the Ministry of Education announced an additional 14 schools which have been selected for phase two.

To further support improved student learning, the June budget announced the creation of a student achievement fund. This program is just one more way in which our government is working toward school excellence and higher student achievement.

Students with special needs are also an important priority of this government. We want to foster an education system that has the flexibility to meet individual needs and that is focused on achieving the best outcomes for all students across the province. Funding for special education has increased by over 17% since 1998-99, to more than \$1.37 billion for the year 2002-03. We are continuing to implement our multi-year plan to improve accountability and quality standards in special education. In this fiscal year, our government will also allocate \$10

million in capital funding to upgrade provincial schools for children with disabilities.

But to make the most of all these programs, we need to ensure that our teachers are the best. Ontario has many excellent and dedicated teachers, who work tirelessly for the noblest of purposes. We honoured these teachers this past Saturday, when the government proclaimed October 5 as World Teachers' Day in Ontario.

Nobody would become a teacher in the first place if they didn't love helping kids succeed. That is why our government is committed to ensuring that our teachers have the most up-to-date skills and knowledge, and why we've set clear expectations for teacher performance and professional development.

We believe that our teachers deserve support in their ongoing efforts to continue learning and upgrading their skills. In 2002-03, we're providing \$10 million in one-time funding to develop further professional learning resources for teachers and principals. Our government knows that a good teacher can make a world of difference. We are committed to ensuring that Ontario teachers can offer the very best learning experience to the students of this province.

It's also vital that our schools are safe and respectful environments for both learning and teaching. The provincial code of conduct sets clear, consistent province-wide standards of behaviour for everyone involved in the education system.

At the beginning of the last school year, a number of important amendments to the Education Act came into effect. Teachers are now able to issue one-day suspensions, and principals are able to expel students from their schools for up to one full school year for a variety of disruptive behaviours and serious infractions. Under a new regulation, fully expelled students are required to complete successfully a strict discipline or equivalent program before returning to the regular school system.

A majority of parents at any school, through school councils, may decide on an appropriate dress code for their students.

All school board employees and service providers who have regular contact with students are required to have criminal background checks. This initiative is being phased in between April 1, 2002, and July 31, 2003.

As well, our government recently passed the Student Protection Act to help protect students from sexual abuse. This act sets out a clear definition of sexual abuse that recognizes not just physical sexual abuse but also sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour of teachers. It gives us more tools to protect our students.

Finally, our government has always recognized that parents play an important role in their children's education. Parents are key partners in achieving higher standards and improved student achievement. In the past year, we continued to increase accountability to parents and to support their direct involvement in the school system.

New regulations took effect at the beginning of the last school year to clarify the advisory role of school

councils. For the first time, the roles and responsibilities of school principals in dealing with school councils have been defined.

In conclusion, and as our actions show, our government is fully committed to a strong public school system in Ontario, a system that supports achievement, a system that supports and encourages improvement, a system that supports and encourages excellence in education. We are committed to ensuring that our students receive the best learning opportunities possible, and we are committed to ensuring that they gain the knowledge and skills they will need to achieve their goals in this competitive, global economy.

Our government will continue to take steps to ensure our young people are on the right path toward a successful future. Our students deserve nothing less than our continued efforts to put their interests and their success first.

1610

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I am indeed proud today to stand and speak to the resolution that's been put before the Legislative Assembly by my leader, Dalton McGuinty, who truly has a vision for education and for students in Ontario.

The part of Excellence for All that I would like to focus on, of course, is Best Start. My particular interest in that part of Excellence for All is because in my role as children's critic I've had the privilege of providing some input to that particular part of the document.

I would like to say, first of all, that I believe Liberals have been pioneers in laying the foundation in this province for providing programs for early child development. In 1989, John Sweeney introduced the New Directions document, where the value of providing a quality early childhood development experience for children in Ontario was recognized. It was because of his foresight that the Liberal government of that day recognized schools as community hubs and would require that in any new school construction child care facilities would be an integral part of that construction.

It wasn't until this government came to power in 1995 that that support was abandoned, and now when schools are built in communities there are no supports provided for child care facilities within the school. It's important to note that, because now Dalton McGuinty has recognized that it is important. This has been substantiated, of course, by the Early Years Study by Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain, where they made reference to community hubs and the value of providing a convenient location with quality educators for our youngest citizens.

Under Best Start, fully 75% of all households in Ontario with children under four will be eligible for assistance with their child care costs. That works out to 330,000 children whose families will receive support. That's an increase of 450% from what is presently available for families with children under four in Ontario. This is a sliding scale of support. Support levels will be based on income and determined on a sliding scale. A

family earning \$25,000 will be eligible for a subsidy of \$15 a day per child, equal to half the cost of care for their child. Those with lower incomes who now receive full subsidies will retain them, so no one is going to be penalized. If they're fully subsidized at the present time, that situation will continue. A household with income of \$75,000 will still be eligible for daily assistance at \$5 a day per child. It's providing some assistance not only for low-income families but for working families where two people are working very hard and still appreciate the assistance that will make it easier for them to access quality care for their children.

Another important component of our plan is that over a period of time we are going to implement professional child care standards. We will enhance the quality of child care in Ontario by raising professional standards and ensuring that they are met. Under Best Start, parents will be entitled to assistance with their child care costs when the caregivers register with the government, undergo background checks and receive ongoing training. This will ensure a steady and significant improvement in the number and quality of child care providers in the province. This is consistent with what we expect of teachers who receive our children every day. It's also consistent with what has been presented in earlier studies.

Finally—I'm sorry; I don't have as much time as I would like on this—I do believe I need to make some points around special education. My colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain is very concerned about the fact that in 1993 in her community, fully 50% of disabled kids in Hamilton went on to post-secondary, and that number has significantly decreased under this government.

Dalton McGuinty is going to ensure that the supports for children with special ed are available and we're going to take away that heavy bureaucratic structure that prevents dollars from getting right to those students with special needs.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I'm glad to see that the first and former Minister of Education for the then-Harris government is with us today because, after all, remember that he was the originator of the chaos we have in our schools today. Remember the film, the video that we all saw, where he was telling staff how to create a crisis so that they could cut? That's exactly what we've seen happen since 1995.

I'm going to leave it to my colleague Rosario Marchese, who can't wait to get up and critique the Liberal plan and compare it with ours and talk about what the Tories should be doing to fix the system. What I want to talk about for a few minutes is what has happened to democracy in our province since the government decided to step in and take over three school boards.

It's interesting to see that here in Toronto—let me say first that I want to congratulate and thank in particular Paula Fletcher, the school trustee for the Toronto-Danforth area, who has been doing a fabulous job, has really taken on some leadership here. She and all of the other school trustees from the Toronto District School

Board put their own financial futures on the line when they voted to allow a deficit. They did not take that decision very lightly, let me tell you. I recall sitting and talking to Ms Fletcher and others as they agonized over what to do, but they had the courage to put the children first and they took that risk.

What has happened here in Toronto, even more so than the takeover of the boards in Hamilton and Ottawa for some reason—I guess it's because of the effectiveness of those trustees; I don't know why else they would do this—they have taken even more of the responsibilities and rights away from the Toronto District School Board than the other boards.

Ms Fletcher provided me with this information and I thank her for that. She wrote a letter to Mr Christie, one of the many bureaucrats who have now been moved in, so-called consultants to the Toronto District School Board, to the tune of about \$1 million a year if they were there that long. About \$25,000 to \$30,000 a week from the board's money, instead of being spent on kids, is now being spent on paying these consultants.

I just want to let you know that here in Toronto, for instance, the written list of roles and responsibilities for trustees from the supervisor is "yes" in Toronto, "yes" in Hamilton and "no" in Ottawa.

Board meetings: in Toronto, all board meetings have been suspended until October 23, but in Hamilton and Ottawa they are allowed to meet, with some caveats.

Committee meetings are completely suspended in Toronto. They're not even allowed to meet to discuss any issues, even non-financial. In Hamilton, they are encouraged to carry on with their committee work, and in Ottawa they're continuing.

Non-financial policy matters: "Staff to decide on all policy matters, including complete review of existing TDSB policy." In Hamilton and Ottawa, the boards can advise the supervisors "on policy matters."

Public access to the board: in Toronto, "none"; although, again, I congratulate the majority of the trustees at the board for holding their informal meetings anyway. But again, in Hamilton and Ottawa, they can continue having their board and committee meetings.

Restrictions on what trustees can say or send out, and this is a real attack on democracy: "full" in Toronto. They have been told that they must not distribute any materials to parents through their schools. Trustees have been barred from answering budget questions at parent council meetings, whereas in Ottawa, no restrictions are in place on what they can send out. In Hamilton there are some restrictions. There you have it: democracy completely and utterly squashed, ended, in the city of Toronto. Why aren't we hearing more about this? This is a very serious issue.

1620

I want to touch briefly on an issue that I think is of great importance. The government members who spoke today reiterated once again that it's just those three boards that couldn't meet their targets. I have—and I'm sure the government members must have seen this—a

resolution from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. That association represents the boards right clear across the province and this is what it says:

"Whereas OPSBA respects the autonomy of all school boards to deal with their local situations;

"Whereas most boards balanced their budgets but notified the Minister of Education that their circumstances would be dire by the end of the 2002-03 school year;

"Whereas three member boards found it impossible to make the compromises necessary in their communities in order to balance their budgets;

"Be it resolved that OPSBA state emphatically to the government that the appointment of these supervisors contravenes the democratically elected boards;

"And furthermore the other OPSBA member boards who have balanced their budgets have done so only by cutting staff and programs and depleting reserves that will further jeopardize students."

When the members on that side stand up and continue to vilify those three courageous boards who did what needed to be done for the children and say the 69 or whatever other boards managed to balance their books—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Ha.

Ms Churley: It's right here—as the Minister of the Environment says "ha"—in this Ontario Public School Boards' Association, giving the government warning that they better fix the funding formula, that they've made massive cuts and they will continue to have to do so or they will be in the same position next year and the year after.

That's what's happening in schools across our province. I have seen the schools in my riding of Toronto-Danforth—we've been fighting a rearguard action since this government came to power. You know, with inflation and student enrolment it's over \$2 billion, if you look at it that way, cut from the system. The government realized there was some inadequate funding across the province, so they said they were going to fix that. What they did instead is lower us to the lowest common denominator and in fact no schools in Ontario now have adequate funding. That's the reality of the situation we're dealing with.

Our schools have lost so much. I'm not even going to go into all the details of all the programs and staff that have been lost, because I don't have time, but I am going to speak briefly about the sexual assault of a little girl in a school in my riding and other schools where we know strangers have entered schools and created a danger for students.

This is a very unfortunate and serious situation. I have been demanding for some time, along with parents in my riding, that there be a special fund set up outside of board of education funding, because they obviously don't have the money to keep up the programs—maybe under the minister of whatever you call it now, security and community or whatever—safety. It's supposed to be about community safety and here we have a situation where

some of our older schools need some physical repairs. We have situations in the Toronto-Danforth area where some schools like Franklin school have done an audit. They know what needs to be changed physically to fix the school, but they don't have the funding, the money to do that. In the meantime, we have some older schools that need in some cases minor and in some cases major physical adjustments. We need a special fund to come from this government from another ministry, since the Ministry of Education doesn't have enough to even keep up with the basics, and make sure that those things are done. Surely that is something that is fundamental to all of us as a society, that when we send our kids to school, we know they're going to be safe.

That incident shook the confidence of all of us. There's hardly anything to say about it, it was so awful, but at least we can learn from it and make those changes.

The last thing I'd like to say is that Ms Paula Fletcher, the school trustee in my community, was at a rally today at noon at Westwood school in the riding—that's in East York. The teachers and students there were protesting against the loss of a very popular teacher who is about to be removed because of the decrease in enrolment. What that means is that about 100 teachers are going to be moved around because of a decrease of up to about 3,000 children, I believe, mostly because more and more are being sent to private schools, for a couple of reasons: they now get funding from the government for that, but also in some cases people are seeing the deterioration in our schools and are sending kids off to private schools, which will further weaken our public system.

I want to congratulate all those students and teachers at that school today for doing this. The government should be prepared that once again we're going to have more chaos and more problems in our schools because of the current crises facing us today.

This is not going to work. We're waiting to see what the funding formula is going to bring, and as you know, as the government has been told by Earl Manners, if the funding formula isn't fixed—we all support that here; it has to be fixed for the good of our schools and of our kids—there is going to be even more chaos in our schools, manufactured by this government so they could give tax cuts to the wealthy. That's what it was all about: "Let's not forget the big corporations and the wealthy," at the expense of our kids. That's the reality of what we're dealing with today and that has to be fixed.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I am pleased to rise today to speak in support of Ontario's excellent system of public education. Specifically, I would like to describe to the honourable members how Ontario's new curriculum benefits Ontario's elementary and secondary school students, in classes from junior kindergarten to grade 12.

As members will recall, when our government was first elected, we promised to reform and improve Ontario's education system. We promised to make it more equitable, to make it more responsive to students' needs and to make it more accountable to parents and taxpayers

throughout the province. Our government has been delivering on that promise.

I recognize that some of those changes have been controversial, yet there is no doubt that today Ontario's education system as a whole is much improved.

Our comprehensive plan for education reform has helped students learn and achieve in several ways.

First, we brought in a challenging new curriculum, from kindergarten to grade 12. This new curriculum sets a high standard for student achievement and excellence and reflects the knowledge and skills our young people need in the 21st century.

Second, we introduced province-wide testing to determine how well our students are achieving and respond appropriately in areas that need improvement.

Third, we created new strategies for learning in response to the test results. Initiatives such as the early reading strategy, for example, and the early math strategy are designed to help students build the solid fundamentals they'll need for a lifetime of successful learning.

We know that the government's education reforms are working. We know that because Ontario students are achieving better results.

One of the keys to performance improvement has been the introduction of the rigorous new curriculum requirements for all grades. Clearly, we have a responsibility to prepare students properly for the challenges of today's competitive global economy. Ontario's new curriculum does that by providing young people with the knowledge and skills they need, by asking them to meet high standards and ensuring they have appropriate support.

It has also increased the opportunities secondary students have to realize career goals by participating in co-op and apprenticeship programs. From the new kindergarten program, through the elementary grades, right through high school, the new curriculum focuses on the basics of reading, writing, math and science. These core skills are absolutely fundamental to our students' future no matter what career goal they decide to pursue.

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To support the introduction of new curriculum throughout Ontario's public education system, our government has provided significant new investments. Those investments include \$280 million since 1998 for new textbooks and related learning materials; \$70 million by the end of the four-year implementation of the new high school program in 2003 to support teacher training for the new elementary and secondary programs; and finally, \$80 million over the same period for other professional supports and resources.

I have noted that Ontario's new curriculum emphasizes the building of skills in core areas, including reading, writing and math. At the same time, however, I think it is important to point out that our education reforms have also put a number of programs and tools in place to provide students with opportunities to build character and develop core values.

The new curriculum helps give students an effective grounding in the fundamental principles of democracy

and responsible citizenship. For example, grade 1 students are now expected to demonstrate an understanding of basic rights and responsibilities in ways that show respect for the rights and property of other people, such as sharing and being courteous and co-operative.

In the health and physical education curriculum for grades 1 to 8, students are encouraged to build positive attitudes toward healthy, active living through healthy lifestyle choices, healthy relationships and physical fitness. By grade 5, for example, students are expected to be able to identify factors that enhance healthy relationships with friends, family and peers, such as trust, honesty, and caring.

A further significant curriculum improvement is that Ontario now has a compulsory grade 10 civics course. This course, which is a first for our province, expects students to identify the rights and responsibilities of citizenship that are practised in their school, in their classroom and in the community.

In the introduction-to-business course for grades 9 or 10, students are asked to consider many aspects of ethics and social responsibility in business, including areas such as the environment and worker health and safety.

As well, the new social sciences and humanities curriculum for grades 11 and 12 expects students to understand the critical role in society that is played by the family.

Finally, our government has introduced a requirement that before graduation, every high school student in Ontario must participate in at least 40 hours of community involvement activities. This requirement is designed to enhance every student's awareness of civic responsibilities and the importance of supporting their community.

I could provide many more examples of Ontario's enhanced curriculum and the high standards it holds out for students and teachers, but the point I want to make here is that the new curriculum has been very successful. We know it has been successful through the results of provincial, national and international tests. Those test results show that the knowledge and skills of Ontario's students are improving. In this regard I should point out that the regular assessment of progress in learning the curriculum is a key part of the government's education reform plan.

We all have a stake in the quality of public education. That means we need to know if the education system is delivering the high quality and consistency we want for our children. Under the government's education reforms, Ontario now assesses students on a regular basis, with tests in reading, writing and math in grade 3 and grade 6 and a test in grade 9 math. In addition, the grade 10 literacy test was administered for the first time during the last school year as a requirement for high school graduation.

If we look at the results of provincial, national and international tests, we can see ample evidence that the knowledge and skills of Ontario students are improving. In provincial testing, for example, the number of English-

language grade 3 students in Ontario who meet the provincial standard in math increased from 43% in 1998 to 61% in 2001. For French-language grade 6 students, those students who meet the provincial standard in math rose from 55% in 1999 to 60% in 2001.

In national testing, the Canada-wide student achievement indicators program found that Ontario's English-language 13-year-olds improved their ranking in mathematical content in the four years between 1997 and 2001, from 15th to fourth of 18 jurisdictions. In 2001, these Ontario students were ranked behind only Alberta and Quebec. Over the same period, Ontario's French-language 13-year-olds improved their ranking in mathematical problem-solving from 15th to fifth of 18 jurisdictions overall.

In international testing, Ontario's 15-year-olds also performed well in the program for international student assessment in 2000. This assessment found that Canadian students ranked near the top among 32 countries for achievement in reading, mathematics and science. Among those 32 countries, only the students from Finland achieved a higher level on the key reading component of the test than students from Ontario. In the tests on math and science, our Ontario students scored significantly higher than students in the United States and Germany.

These results are very promising, and our students, teachers and parents can be justifiably proud of the progress that has been made. However, the government also recognizes that some students need extra assistance to master the higher standards of the new curriculum, and we are committed to helping them. To these students in the 2002-03 school year, the government has invested almost half a billion dollars in student-focused funding for school boards throughout the province.

A number of stakeholders have expressed concern that Ontario's new high school curriculum for applied courses may be too challenging for some students. I want to assure the honourable members that the government is committed to finding ways to get the support they need to students who are struggling. I understand that the Ministry of Education is working to address these issues over the coming year with a number of educational partners.

The goal here is to ensure that all students in the province acquire the requisite skills for employment and post-secondary opportunities. Accordingly, Ontario is committed to helping students master these skills early to ensure they have an opportunity for lifelong success in learning.

As I mentioned, province-wide testing allows us to identify those areas where students are having problems. With these test results, we are in a much better position to develop strategies for improvement. These strategies need to contain three essential elements. First, they need to set measurable targets for improvement. Second, they need to develop effective tools to make that improvement happen. Third, they need to have appropriate resources allocated to enable these goals to be achieved.

During last year's testing, it was determined that only 49% of all grade 3 students in the province were achieving the provincial standard in reading. To respond to this problem, the government introduced an early reading strategy. The strategy is a tool to help improve the reading skills of children from junior kindergarten to grade 3. To support this strategy, the government has committed an investment of \$29 million.

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This year in May the Minister of Education announced an expansion of the strategy with an additional investment of \$25 million. This funding will be used to expand the early reading strategy to grade 6 and to establish a new early math strategy that will improve the performance in math of students from JK to grade 3. In the last provincial budget, the government also announced an additional investment of \$5 million during this school year to extend the early math strategy to the grade 6 level, while also enhancing the math teaching skills of elementary school teachers.

By implementing these strategies, the government is adopting a proven approach to improving the learning performance of young people.

A number of other jurisdictions, including England, have been successful in raising student achievement through a similar combination of intensive, student-focused and skill-based training for teachers and the setting of improvement targets.

The funding for both the early reading and early math strategies supports improved teaching strategies and new learning resources. In both cases, school boards are required to set measurable targets for improving their students' achievement. Both strategies provide special assistance for schools whose students need extra help in achieving their goals. All schools are required to report their test results every year, along with their progress in meeting their targets.

In this regard, I think it is worth pointing out that the Ministry of Education is now moving into phase two of the support for schools that need extra help program. This initiative is an important component of the province's early reading strategy. It is designed to put additional focused support into a group of selected schools where the need to improve the reading ability of students has been identified as exceptional. Last fall, in phase one of the support for schools that need extra help program, 16 schools were recommended by a steering committee with input from local school boards. Last week the minister announced the expansion of the program to include an additional 14 schools.

To further support the improvement of student learning throughout the province, it is also worth noting that the Minister of Finance announced the creation of the student achievement fund in last June's provincial budget.

I have described how Ontario's new, more rigorous curriculum benefits students throughout our public education system. I have also outlined several of the important reforms the government has taken over the past

seven years to improve student learning and achievement. The new curriculum sets high standards, and given the right circumstances, most students in the province will be able to meet them. That being said, however, I would also like to take this opportunity to point out that students with special needs are also an important priority for our government.

Ultimately, our goal is to foster an education system that is flexible enough to meet the needs of every individual, a system that achieves the best possible outcome for all students, including those with special needs.

To this end, the government has increased funding for special education by more than 17% since 1998-99. This year the province is investing more than \$1.37 billion in special education, more than ever before. At the same time, we are continuing the process of implementing a comprehensive plan to improve accountability and quality standards in the area of special education.

The government has allocated \$10 million in capital funding to upgrade the provincial schools for children with disabilities. In the last provincial budget, the government announced one-time assistance of \$10 million to enhance access to the ISA-related assessments.

Our government is strongly committed to a system of public education that supports the goals of achievement, improvement and excellence, and we are investing more than \$14 billion this year to ensure that students throughout Ontario receive the best learning opportunities possible. We believe that students, parents and taxpayers have a right to expect their public education system to provide the knowledge and skills needed for success in today's global, competitive economy.

Our government will continue to act on that belief by taking steps to put every young person in Ontario on the path to a bright and successful future.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I'm happy to rise in support of Mr McGuinty's motion. It's an important motion. I want to keep it simple; I want to cut to the chase. Our educational system is broken. You broke it and we're going to fix it. That's what the Excellence for All plan is intended to do.

When you look at the cumulative abandonment of this government since they came to power in 1995, it's really rather shameful. At the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, for example, we see per pupil funding actually down over \$1,000; no full-time teacher-librarians in any of our Hamilton elementary schools. So much for literacy. While enrolment has risen by 3% during the last six years, teacher staffing is actually down 7.3%. In fact, since 1995 the Hamilton board has lost some 639 positions, 191 of them teaching positions: all lunchroom assistants, cafeteria assistants, bus assistants, library secretaries, primary and junior physical education specialists, primary and junior music specialists—gone; elementary guidance teachers, family studies teachers, design and technology teachers—gone; consultants for music, history, geography, science, technology, physical education and art—gone.

Now, even after a long, painful two-year process, a ministry-mandated process, by the way, that said that three isolated rural community-based schools, namely Dundana, Lynden and Sheffield, would stay open, we see your recently appointed hit man, Dr Murray, in there talking about closing these schools. Shameful.

When this government talked about creating a crisis, you kept your promise. Teachers are demoralized and parents are shaking their heads. Now, in addition to these public cuts, you've put us into education purgatory, asking for \$16 million more to be cut. It's time for some real change in Ontario, change that puts kids first. The Ontario Liberal plan for education, Excellence for All, would do exactly that.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's good to have this opportunity to speak to this resolution. There's so much to say. I only have 27 minutes but we can probably fit it all in.

I want to speak briefly about what the Conservatives have done and then get back to the Liberals, because they deserve some of my attention as well.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I hope to give you as much praise as I can, to the extent that that's possible.

I want to say that the Conservatives have broken the educational system. Minister of the Environment, Chris Stockwell, my friend, you guys broke it in pieces. You took the system and you cracked it open. It was like an egg. You just hacked it open, bang, like that.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You did. There was nothing you left unturned in the educational system, because you guys said, "Now the system is broken, we've got to fix it." Nobody said it was broken.

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Hon Mr Stockwell: I did.

Mr Marchese: Only Chris Stockwell said it was broken. Mike Harris said it was broken. A couple of you said it was broken. You said, "I have an idea," like John Snobelen said, "I've got an idea. Let's break the system or let people know we're breaking the system or let them know the system is broken so we can come in, soldier in, and say, 'We fixed it.'"

You have done nothing to fix anything except to break teachers and to break boards and to break the educational system apart. You have vilified teachers from day one. Now we've got Witmer saying, "I love teachers because I used to be one too." And you've got Ernie Eves saying, "I love teachers too."

Hon Mr Stockwell: I do.

Mr Marchese: Chris Stockwell is saying, "I love teachers too." Ted, you love teachers too, right? There is not one Conservative member here today who doesn't love teachers. But seven years ago, you couldn't find a Tory who would say, "I love teachers. That's why we're beating them up."

Hon Mr Stockwell: Tough love.

Mr Marchese: It's the boot kind of love that Chris gave them for seven years. The problem is that we

haven't spared anyone in terms of the cuts. ESL has been savaged. That is a program called English as a second language, for those members who might not know.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I know.

Mr Marchese: I know you know, Chris, but some of your friends probably don't.

Hon Mr Stockwell: They know.

Mr Marchese: OK, they know. Well, you savaged that program. You did: 60% cuts in that field. We're talking about immigrant families who come here, who you want here, I presume. Some of you don't, or at least your Alliance cousins sometimes have dubious opinions on this matter. This is true. But I think most Conservatives think that immigrants are good because they come, they work hard, they buy, they spend, they make the economy turn. Right? It helps capitalism. You know that.

But what you also know is that when they come you want to give them a hand. Some of them speak English well, some of them don't. If they have the skills to learn the language, they integrate better, they work more efficiently and so on. You know the story, Chris.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Well, sometimes.

Mr Marchese: But you guys cut that program—savaged it.

Librarians: 25%, 26% cuts. Chris, you would know, or your wife does, that librarians are the ones who pass on the love of learning, the love of reading. They're an important part of the school system. You guys chopped them too.

Hon Mr Stockwell: We did not.

Mr Marchese: Chris, Minister of the Environment, how can you at once say, "We increased funding," and the studies we've looked at say you've slashed funding? I don't get it; maybe you do. But I don't see it, because the two polarities somehow don't meet. You understand that.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You've been listening to Annie Kidder.

Mr Marchese: Ah, we should listen more to John Snobelen, Madam Ecker, Madam Witmer, Premier Eves, the former Premier, and maybe Chris. We should be listening to them. Because if we listen to them, the system has been enriched by them, meaning that more money has been put into the education system than ever before.

You've got all these people out there saying, "Man, all these cuts, they're hurting." What you need is a Chris Stockwell saying, "No, you're not hurting. You're just not getting it."

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): You think you're hurting, but you're not.

Mr Marchese: Someone else is hurting, but you're not. So if you've had ESL cuts, you're wrong, because you're listening to Annie Kidder. If you've had librarian cuts, you're wrong because you're listening to the Elementary Teachers' Federation. If you've had cuts to secretarial support, you're probably wrong because you're probably listening to a union, CUPE, let's say—whatever. Right, Chris? That's the answer. You guys have got to package it better, because a whole lot of

people out there are not listening to you. I'm concerned for you. I'm speaking on your behalf, worried about your future, you understand.

So all this money you're spending is not enough. You've got to spend more.

Hon Mr Stockwell: More?

Mr Marchese: Yes. You spent \$1.4 million for ads in the Sun, the Star and the Globe to convince them you guys are doing a great job. It's not enough. You've got to take more out of your deep pockets and spend it to do more advertising so the public understands that you guys put in more, not less. Do that. I know you guys are suffering real bad. Think about it.

Madam Witmer came into committee and I raised this point with her. I said, "The teachers, the federations and the trustee associations have been saying that you have not been giving them the money they need to negotiate fair agreements and settlements with their teachers and non-teachers." They are getting \$590 million less than ever before to negotiate some fair settlements.

Hon Mr Stockwell: More money.

Mr Marchese: No, don't say, "More money," Chris, because Elizabeth Witmer said I was right when I pointed this out.

Hon Mr Stockwell: She said you were right?

Mr Marchese: She said that. She said I was right.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): We find that hard to believe.

Mr Marchese: I know it's hard to believe. I found it hard to believe too. She said in response that Rozanski is looking at this issue.

Hon Mrs Johns: She didn't say you were right.

Mr Marchese: She agreed with me that it's a serious issue. She didn't say I was wrong. She agreed that there is a shortage of dollars, that they are not flowing through and that Rozanski would be looking at it. Do you feel better? So Rozanski is looking at it and that's good, but she would never admit that you guys have not been flowing the money; of course not.

Hon Mrs Johns: And she'd never admit you were right.

Mr Marchese: We've got to get that Hansard here to prove it to you because you won't believe me otherwise. I'll get it for you.

I wanted to tell you that you've broken the system and there are a whole lot of people out there who want to fix it. The Liberals want to fix it too.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The Liberals want to fix everything.

Mr Marchese: But they want to fix it. New Democrats want to fix it as well. But here are our differences. This is where I want to speak to the Liberal plan for a few moments.

Mr McMeekin: Have you read it?

Mr Marchese: Yes, I did, actually, because I have such a keen interest in your education plan.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It's funny, eh?

Mr Marchese: It's not too funny. It isn't. I'm going to comment on this. The only thing worth commenting on

in this plan is their desire and interest in reducing class size in grades 1, 2 and 3, and they've now brought it down to JK/SK, I believe they say. So they're going to keep class size—

Hon Mr Stockwell: How do they pay for that?

Mr Marchese: I'm going to get to that, in terms of how you're going to pay for it.

The only thing worthwhile talking about in this Liberal plan is their interest in reducing class size, because it's a good idea. From a teacher perspective, it's a good idea. Those who are not teachers, who might not know, could deduce that smaller classes are more educationally sound. You don't have to be a teacher necessarily to understand that.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I agree.

Mr Marchese: Chris Stockwell agrees. So that's a good idea.

Here are some of the other ideas. The lighthouse school is something they have borrowed from Britain. They were called beacon schools there. My point on the lighthouse concept is this: we know where students will do well. If you go to Forest Hill, in that pocket of wealth, just as an example, they're going to do very well.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You're saying rich kids, right?

Mr Marchese: Rich kids, yes.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm not sure you're right.

Mr Marchese: Well, let me get to the point. If you come from a background of wealth, if you have a professional background—money in and of itself doesn't necessarily give you the incentive to do well in school, but usually it's accompanied by some professional background of sorts. So it's class we're talking about, which class you come from. If you come from a professional background and you've got a few bucks or a lot of bucks—you're tempted to say no. You want to be able to say, "No, that's not true." Anybody in this country can make it, right?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Right on.

Mr Marchese: That's the Conservative ideology. Just stick to that and you'll be OK.

The point is that what the Liberals want is to be able to say, "We've got a lighthouse school here that's doing really well." We know, because they like your test scores and they like your standardized test. They don't want to say it like that, but they do. "When we look at that, we're going to know which of these schools are doing well. We're going to see these great school practices and we're going to give them money so they can share their best practices with those schools—let us say as, an example, Regent Park—where the levels might not be as high."

I've got to ask you, Chris, because you will understand this, what can a teacher from Forest Hill teach someone teaching in the Regent Park area? Yes, you do know, Chris.

Hon Mr Stockwell: What?

Mr Marchese: Nothing. I've got to tell you this. If you get the teacher teaching in Regent Park going to Forest Hill, the results will be the same irrespective of whom you put in that school.

1700

Hon Mr Stockwell: If you get smart kids, you've got a smart classroom.

Mr Marchese: If you get a lot of rich kids coming from professional homes, they're going to do well. It's part of your class background. You feed on that. If you have the experiences at home, the reading habits, the professional drive to get ahead and all of those things, you're going to do well. There is nothing you can teach by way of methodology to someone who comes from the community of Regent Park. What they need is serious help that ought to come from governments so that we give those young people and those families the tools and conditions to do better. That's what you've got to do.

The lighthouse school is a bad idea. You're not going to help those schools that are in trouble for a variety of class reasons. Whether they be issues of poverty, dealing with kids who come from refugee homes or dealing with issues that have behavioural problems, communication problems and/or intellectual kinds of problems, you're not going to be able to deal with them by sending some teacher from some lighthouse school to give them the methodological tools to help those schools that come from that kind of background. It isn't going to work.

By the way, I've got to tell you, Chris, your Minister Witmer came into our committee on estimates. Do you remember the attack I made on her where she said she was going to give \$5,000 for those schools that meet and/or exceed standardized tests?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Yes.

Mr Marchese: For your information, because she may not have told you, she now has \$5,000 for every school, not just those schools where they meet and/or exceed the standardized test results. I said, "Elizabeth Witmer, you didn't even give me some credit for attacking you so savagely, so severely. Why didn't you drop me a note saying, 'Rosario, I listened to you and I changed my mind. It was a dumb idea?'"

Hon Mr Stockwell: No.

Mr Marchese: Oh, it was a dumb idea and your minister knew it. But she came to the committee on estimates and assumed that somehow people like Marchese wouldn't see it. I said, "Elizabeth, I didn't know you changed your mind. In your budget you said only those schools will get the \$5,000 where the students meet and/or exceed. What happened, Elizabeth? Why didn't you just drop me a note saying I attacked you good, you learned from it and changed your mind?" She just smiled.

Anyway, those were the lighthouse schools. The Liberals have turnaround teams—same idea. The leader of the Liberal Party came and said earlier on they're going to have turnaround teams because schools are not getting the support they need.

Hon Mr Stockwell: This is all yacky, yacky.

Mr Marchese: Something like that, yes.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Blah, blah, blah.

Mr Marchese: Yes, blah, blah, blah. Right. What he said at the end of his comments was, "We won't punish

schools,” but in the 10-point plan that I have in my five little fingers—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: He did. He would punish those schools, and he said he would punish some administrators. They would be fired if they didn't meet those expectations. So what he's saying—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: He didn't say that today. But, my friend, he did say that when he released his 10-point plan. He said bureaucrats would be fired if they weren't able to bring those kids up to the standards they're setting. Here's the point, Chris, because I know you're following it and you've been very keen on these issues. You're going to go back and report to your wife on these discussions, I know.

Hon Mr Stockwell: He has trouble remembering what he said.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese: The point is this: the turnaround teams can do so very little to bring these people to an area where there is excessive poverty, where we have a lot of refugees and special education needs. No turnaround team in the world can come into that area and bring those kids up to scratch simply by bringing some methodological kind of teaching tool that's going to change that around. It's not going to happen.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: It's not going to happen, Liberal members speaking to this issue. I can't wait for some of you to speak to this issue.

Then they have the issue of choice. Parents can choose to go where they want. That means that when they see the test results and they find their local school is just not up to stuff, they can choose to send them to another area where they do well. A whole lot of wealthy people in my riding say, “I'm leaving because I don't like it here. These kids are not producing as well as they should.” Liberal McGuinty says, “I've got a choice. I can take them from Toronto all the way to Scarborough and it'll be OK.” It's a dumb idea. It's dumb, dumb, dumb. You move into this community, you stay in that community, is my view, and you do that by making every school a successful school. You work with each school to make it successful, rather than saying to the parent, “The standardized tests show this school isn't doing well. You can just leave and go somewhere else.”

Mr McMeekin: What do the teachers' unions say?

Mr Marchese: Teachers' unions? Are you attacking the teachers' unions? You've got a lot of friends there.

Mr McMeekin: They like our plan.

Mr Marchese: Yes, I know some of them like your plan.

I'm just talking directly to the public. I'm saying to you, get a hold of our plan, get a hold of their plan, because you need to see it. I'm saying to you, just compare what we have to say and what they have to say. On the issue of financing, I say to you watching this program, the Tories have broken the system and they've

taken billions of dollars out. Yes. In order to fix it, I am saying to you, you have to reinvest.

McGuinty says, “We're reinvesting \$1.6 billion, the NDP \$1.5 billion,” just to out-do us, you see. They saw this, by the way. We encouraged them indirectly, shall I say, to produce their own little plan. So they are going to spend 1.6 billion. How are they going to find the money?

Hon Mr Stockwell: How?

Mr Marchese: They are not raising any taxes. They are going to get them from the \$2.2 billion you guys gave to the corporations, and with all that \$2.2 billion, my God, they're going to fund everything.

I'll make that list available to you in a second. They are going to fund every promise that they have made, will make forever—\$2.2 billion. Here's the problem. There isn't \$2.2 billion to be given out. They have only so far committed of that \$2.2 billion about \$700 million, \$750 million, more or less; possibly \$800 million. You know how short they are of making all those promises?

Hon Mr Stockwell: They are shorter than you.

Mr Marchese: They're much shorter than I am. I'm only five feet four. With that promise they are this tiny. It ain't going to go too far. It's this rubber ball they keep on bouncing in Queen's Park. It keeps on bouncing from one wall to the other—\$2.2 billion we are spending on every promise we make. McGuinty says we have to spend \$1.6 billion because we need to invest in education. Where are you going to get the money? It's not there. “We are going to get the money because the economy will grow.” Holy cow.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: If I can't grow any more than this, this economy ain't going to grow much faster. I have to tell you, we've had good growth in the last five, six or seven years. Mercifully the Tories have had the good luck to be in power while that happened. It's not going to be seen again for the next little while, I'll tell you. We've had a period of a recession last year; it's likely to dip even more. The money is not going to be there. They can't rely on the kind of growth they expect to keep all of the promises they are making.

New Democrats are not afraid to say we have to invest. We are dedicating a tax that we are proposing to raise the money. We are not afraid to say we have to raise income taxes. What we are saying to you, those of you watching—because the Tories already know—we are proposing two new tax brackets so that whatever you earn over \$100,000 gets taxed at 1.5% and whatever you earn over \$150,000 gets taxed at 1.5%. We will raise \$1.2 billion to \$1.3 billion to do that, to pay for our educational promises.

I am saying to those of you who are watching, we cannot make promises that we cannot keep, but the system cannot be fixed unless we find more money to be able to do that. You can't. Often the Liberals have said the special education waiting lists are just horrendous. We say it's horrendous; 40,000 or so waiting on lists to be identified so that they can get the attention they need. It's a drama, that one. It's sad that we are hurting so many

students because they can't be identified with a particular problem or other. It's sad. How do we fix that? There is no money if you vote for the Liberals.

We're saying we've got to raise the money again. We've got to get some money back that the Tories have given away—\$11 billion just given away, as a result of which we have an educational system crumbling, desperate for support and cash. The health care system, environment, anything you can think of is falling apart. We need to get some money back so we are dedicating two brackets of taxes, collecting \$1.2 billion in order to keep our promises on education. That's what it takes.

Mr McMeekin: Come say that in my riding.

Mr Marchese: I want the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot to go into his community and say, "We're not raising your taxes, but we're going to spend \$1.6 billion that we don't have." That's what I want him to say, and I know he's going to squirm. He's going to hide as much as he possibly can when people ask him, "How are you going to keep your promise to fund hospitals?" Here: "McGuinty said he would find money to fund hospitals by cancelling the \$2.2 billion in corporate tax cuts." Help parents of disabled children; instead of putting another \$2.2 billion in tax breaks for large corporations, a greater priority would be to help families like that.

1710

Lower tuition. Our universities are funded 59th out of 60 North American jurisdictions. McGuinty says, "I can understand where university administrators are coming from when they say that they want to charge higher tuition." He's going to get it from the \$2.2 billion. That's not fair. Eliminate the deficit. We shouldn't be going ahead with a \$2.2-billion cut when we're facing a \$5-billion deficit. We have to stop spending millions of dollars on government advertising. The list goes on: money for SuperBuild, more public health offices, fix health, education, and fund tax breaks. It goes on and on, all with the \$2.2 billion that they're going to get from them, and they've only spent \$700 million. The rest is not committed because they know that the economy is not doing very well, the money is not there and they're taking that rubber ball and bouncing it from one room to the other in this House, day in and day out.

You, listeners, have to pay attention to our differences. Listen to the couple of Liberals who are going to come up next and see what great news they're going to share with you about their promises to spend money they don't have. They won't raise one tax cent from you to be able to fix that system. Compare our plan, compare theirs and see who's credible on these issues. I say to you, vote for whom you believe to be most credible and that will give the support to fix the educational system. We provide that.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I'm delighted to have the opportunity today to discuss the Ontario government's initiatives designed to support teaching excellence and improve student achievement. Nothing we do as a society is more critical

than providing our children with an excellent education. Education is their ticket to a prosperous future. A good education is important because it equips our children with the knowledge and skills to compete in today's world.

Today being opposition day, we perhaps are discussing the Liberal plan. I'll take the liberty, if you'll permit me, to quote something from the Toronto Star, which is so well-loved by the opposition. This is from October 6, and the headline says, "Liberal Plan for Education too Vague." I'll take the liberty of reading some lines from this Toronto Star article: "It took little time to digest a 24-page brochure with photos, big type, lots of white space and few words per page."

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Who's the author of the article? Guy Giorno?

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Gill: The Toronto Star article from October 6 goes on further, "To describe the pamphlet as a 'policy' or 'platform' is something of an exaggeration. It's a collection of vague platitudes and catchy slogans, with either nothing to back them up or the true plans well hidden.

"Substance? Hardly," it goes on to say. "There's more beef in k.d. lang's freezer" than in this platform.

Their election platform, if you want to call it that, talks about respect, honesty, responsibility and fairness. Those sound like great ideas and I think they are, but they're not original. On page 39 of the Conservatives' 1999 election platform, the Blueprint, as you will recall, it says clearly, "We'll make the teaching of respect and responsibility mandatory in our schools." So they're trying to steal that idea from us.

Another good idea is letting parents choose to send their children to any publicly funded school, even if it's not in their neighbourhood. Once again, our previous Premier, Mike Harris, announced it in last year's throne speech—another idea that came from us.

It goes on to say, "Nice brochure, flashy cover, but vague rhetoric isn't policy and pleasant sentiments aren't a plan. What's the real agenda?"

Teachers are critical to student success. We know it's very important to have good teachers and, as we all remember from our childhood days—

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Many, many years ago.

Mr Gill: Yes, many years ago, and I still remember because it was a pleasant experience.

Those teachers who made the difference in our lives—many of them are now in Canada who taught me math, science and English. And I'm still learning, as you can well appreciate. It's a lifelong experience.

These teachers are with our students five days a week, 10 months a year. A teacher can have a huge impact on how a student thinks, what he or she believes in, and how young people view the world.

I'm proud to say that Ontario has many committed and dedicated teachers. I'm very happy to acknowledge a couple of teachers from my own family. My first cousin Michael Gill is a teacher, and my niece Meena Gill is a

teacher in Bramalea. This summer, as I was reaching out to meet my constituents—the traditional door knocking—I didn't know which school she was teaching at, but I happened to be in the neighbourhood. Parents brought their little kids, maybe five, six, seven years old: "Come here. Raminder Gill is here. He's the uncle of your teacher." They were quite happy and pleased to see me. I guess she is well liked by her students and by the parents of those students.

With this in mind, the government took action to raise awareness of the contributions and achievements of teachers by officially declaring this past Saturday, October 5, World Teachers' Day in Ontario. World Teachers' Day is a day designated by UNESCO to recognize the contribution teachers make to society. The day offered us the opportunity to think about and appreciate the contribution teachers make to all our lives, student lives and their bright futures.

We ask a lot of our teachers today, in fact more than ever before. Not only do we ask them to equip our children with skills and knowledge, but we ask them to help our children develop the self-esteem and confidence they need to live life fully as active and responsible citizens.

We ask teachers to inspire in our children a lifelong love of learning. We also ask our teachers to be educational leaders, to work closely with parents and other members of the community to improve student learning.

As parents and taxpayers, we expect a lot from our teachers. This is why our government is committed to supporting teacher excellence. We want to ensure Ontario teachers have the full opportunity to be the best qualified and the most highly skilled in Canada.

Since May 2000, we have been putting in place the policies and programs to assure parents that all teachers are well qualified and have the up-to-date skills and knowledge to meet the high standards of the new curriculum. I was very happy to be part of the government that had the courage to eliminate OAC, or grade 13. I know there are going to be some adjustment concerns. When I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, I talked to many of the universities, which have assured us that with the additional funding the spaces are going to be there for all willing students who are going to be going to colleges or universities, as they so desire. I'm very proud of the universities that we have in this province.

I was quite pleased in fact—I guess I felt honoured—that my own university, the University of Toronto, where I went to learn chemical engineering, invited me back the other day, and now I'm on the advisory committee of the dean of chemical engineering. I'm quite pleased to be there. Many highly esteemed, much more learned members are there. Paul Godfrey is one of them, and the chairman of DuPont chemicals is there, so I'll be very happy to share some experiences with them and perhaps I'll be able to impart some of the life experience I've gained so far through lifelong learning; and I continue to do that.

1720

To ensure teaching excellence, the government has introduced a number of important new initiatives. The new teacher performance appraisal system introduced in March of this year creates regular, standardized evaluations for all classroom teachers in Ontario. The new system responds to concerns raised by groups that the current methods for measuring a teacher's in-class performance were inconsistent across the province. It assures parents that regular appraisals of teachers are taking place and focuses on the key areas of teacher performance, such as commitment to students and student learning; communication with students and their parents; professional knowledge of teachers; their teaching practices; participation in the life of the school and school community; and participation in ongoing professional learning.

Going back to when I was in high school—a member from the opposition said, "A long time ago." I guess so; I still remember the experience. I remember teachers who would be there sometimes from 7 am till 6 pm, and many times on Saturdays, to make sure that the students—maybe I needed more help; I don't know—were given the tools to learn, even if it meant extra time spent that was more volunteer time by the teachers. I was quite blessed, having learned that way. They were great teachers who did spend extra time, be it in extracurricular activities, be it soccer or volleyball or be it preparing students for the upcoming standardized testing.

The first standardized test I wrote was in grade 4, and here we are still struggling with whether a standardized test is a good thing or not. That's the only way to find out how well the schools are working, how well the students are learning. There's no other way. Otherwise you keep passing the students and all of a sudden they reach grade 13, they go to university and it's found that they're not up to par.

More and more, the world has become a global economic unit, if you want to call it that, and it's very important for children to learn the skills where they are competing throughout the world. We look upon many countries to send us their brightest in IT, their medical graduates, but we want to make sure that our own kids, through varieties of testing, be it teacher testing, standardized testing of the kids, are up to standard. I'm very happy to be part of the government that has brought in these tests.

As you saw the other day, test results have improved. I think the Liberals were saying they want to have a 75% pass average. I'm happy to report that we're already there, so I don't know what their agenda is going to be next other than, say, 100%. So I'm quite pleased that we are there. And there's more to be done.

Ontario's new teacher qualifying test, to be taken by all new teacher candidates, will assure parents that teachers new to publicly funded Ontario schools have the level of knowledge and skills expected of beginning teachers.

This year the province-wide test is being taken as a field trial to further validate the test and ensure that it is fair, accurate and effective. Starting next year, candidates seeking Ontario teaching certification will be required to pass the qualifying test as a certification requirement of the Ontario College of Teachers.

Through the professional learning program, Ontario is also helping teachers to be as up to date and knowledgeable as possible. The program supports student achievement by helping teachers continuously improve and stay up to date in key topics such as student assessment and the use of technology. Under this program, certified teachers in Ontario complete professional learning activities for a minimum of 14 courses over a five-year cycle to maintain their teaching certificate with the Ontario College of Teachers.

Staying up to date is not new to teachers. The majority of Ontario teachers regularly participate in professional development. This program builds on many of the professional development courses currently available to teachers. As well, two years ago, our government introduced a language proficiency test for all teachers from other jurisdictions trained in a language other than English or French who apply to the Ontario College of Teachers. The test helps to ensure that these applicants can communicate clearly either in English or in French before they receive a certificate to teach in Ontario.

On October 3 this year, this government announced it was investing \$21 million in a series of initiatives designed to support teachers throughout their teaching careers and to help them improve student learning. Like all professionals, teachers want to keep current. Many teachers regularly update their knowledge and skills. They take courses and they get involved in many different learning activities that enhance their teaching skills and can be included in the professional learning program.

We want to give Ontario's hard-working and dedicated teachers the opportunities that they have been asking for to help their students succeed. The new initiatives announced last week by the Minister of Education include \$10 million for professional learning resources for teachers and principals, as promised in the spring 2002 budget; \$5 million to ensure a sufficient number of low-cost, easily accessible courses are available to teachers, principals and other administrators across the province—this funding will allow school boards and professional associations to develop or adopt distance education and other courses for teachers and principals; and \$5 million more annually to support teachers in improving students' reading skills at selected schools as part of Ontario's early reading strategy. The government will be investing these funds in professional development specific to teaching early reading skills and for learning resources for the selected schools. Schools will also be given the opportunity to work with literacy experts in order to develop more effective teaching strategies.

Much has been done; more needs to be done. We are on the right track.

I'm going to take the liberty of going back to the article I saw in the Toronto Star. I think it's a very important article for parents at home to know how vague the Liberal plan is. I won't read the whole thing because I'm sure the people at home—this appeared on October 6—know that this was empty rhetoric with no plan. They're just throwing money—\$1.6 billion; I don't know where they're going to get the money. I think they are heading toward more taxes, more deficits. I think that's their plan.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wanted to ask if the member could clarify the fact that that piece was written by Guy Giorno?

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: No. Sit down. Further debate?

Mr Peters: I'll clarify that without a point of order. I think it's important to remind the citizens of Ontario that the author of that article is the former chief of staff and one of the chief architects of the damage and demise that we've seen in this education system in this province, Guy Giorno. That's who wrote that article. How dare that member quote from that article? It's this party, this government, that has destroyed education.

You know what? It continues on. This very evening, the Thames Valley District School Board, because of the budget constraints that have been imposed upon them, has to contemplate closing schools—closing schools in my own riding, in Springfield. My phones have lit up today from Springfield and West Lorne. You know what the problem is? This government doesn't recognize that this template that they seem to impose on education, this Toronto-centred template, doesn't fit the rest of this province. There is a lack of recognition by this government that there is more to this province than the city of Toronto, that there are differences that exist in this province. Rural Ontario is different than urban Ontario, and this government has failed to recognize that. That's why we're seeing the Thames Valley District School Board having to contemplate the closure of five schools, and this government is the architect responsible for that.

1730

The changes that we've seen happen in the education system, the fact that you don't teach home economics any more—home ec was one of the best subjects that was taught. It helped individuals out. Your government cut it out. Shop: you cut it out. Extracurricular activities: we've seen the damage you've done there.

You guys have got to put the brakes on things, but you're not doing that. Dalton McGuinty has a plan. Dalton McGuinty is going to bring excellence back to education in this province. We're going to put students first and not put corporations in this province first. We're going to think about the students. We're going to start with the early years, making sure those individuals start at a young age learning what it is to have a good education. You don't recognize that, but Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party do recognize that.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate. It's been interesting to listen to government members continue to talk about the fact that there's more money, that there haven't been any cuts. Of course, we know they've played with the definition of what classroom spending is and that allowed this government to do a whole lot of things. But on the ground, where it matters, in places like my hometown of Hamilton, the numbers tell a very different story than the one the government wants to spin out of here.

In 1993, the money received and the money spent by the Hamilton board per student was \$7,212. Today—I'm using the figures from 1999-2000—it's \$6,158.89 per pupil; \$7,200 to \$6,100. There's the gap.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): How much of it is in the classroom?

Mr Christopherson: The member across the way is heckling, "How much is in the classroom?" which really is insulting to raise, given the fact this government—

Laughter.

Mr Christopherson: Well, they laugh, but this government has decided that transportation costs have absolutely nothing to do with what goes on in the classroom. How the students get from home to the school somehow bears absolutely no relationship to what happens in the classroom. How about heating the classroom or providing lights or maintaining computer equipment? Those things don't calculate into their formula for what is classroom spending. So I would caution members across the way in the government benches when talking about classroom spending, because all you've done is play with those numbers.

The fact of the matter is that our board said, "Enough is enough." By the way, I stand squarely behind chair Judith Bishop and our entire board in taking on this government. They said, "Enough is enough. We're not going to continue to do more damage to the education system in Hamilton to make the Tories look good. We're not going to do it any more." So they refused to cut out the last \$16 million that would be necessary to deliver a balanced budget. Why? Because they weren't prepared to go there. The added damage that \$16 million would do—in fact, they already make the statement in one of their own fact sheets. I've only got about a minute.

Quoting the trustees from the board document, "The board has probably gone too far in accommodating provincial government cutbacks, as these programs have been particularly hard hit, even though these needs are increasing." In this case, they're talking about special needs and English as a second language, but it applies to all the programs.

I say, good for that board, good for the board in Toronto, and the same for the board in Ottawa. Somebody has got to stand up for the kids, because clearly you're not prepared to do it.

You roll in Mr Murray, who is now the supervisor of the Hamilton board, and somehow magically he's going to take out \$16 million and, I suppose, make the argument on your behalf that no damage is going to be done

to our kids' education. It's not going to happen. There is going to be serious damage and you, government, are not going to say, "Blame Mr Murray, the supervisor." You are going to take responsibility for every penny he cuts out in your name and you're going to be responsible and accountable for every program and staff job that we lose as a result of the supervisor taking over, with dictatorial powers, our board—powers we don't agree with.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate and urge the House to support the resolution supporting Dalton McGuinty's Excellence for All education plan.

I want to focus exclusively on one aspect of it, and that is our plan to cancel the private school tax funding. Premier Eves plans to spend about \$500 million on support for private schools.

I live in a community that has gone through an enormous amount of change over the last 30 years. We are now perhaps the most diverse area in the world—multi-religious, multicultural, multi-faith, multi-language—and it has happened with a minimum of challenges and problems, primarily because in our secondary schools all of our young people come together. I will just say to the people of Ontario that in the area I represent there are now probably 12 or 13 brand new high schools planned or opening on the basis of language, ethnicity or religion.

We are going to fragment our education system in a very dangerous way. So the aspect of this plan that I want to focus on, as I say, is cancelling the private school funding. If we don't do that, in my opinion, we are sowing the seeds of our own destruction. The thing that has made this province great, perhaps the most important thing, has been our public schools, where all of our young people come together. I warn us, we are in the process of fragmenting that, and in my judgment, we can't let it happen.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I also rise today to support the motion put forward by Dalton McGuinty, our Liberal leader. I want to underline "Excellence for All"—not only "excellence" but "for all."

The government talks about equality very often. We're looking at a plan that will give and provide true equality, because not every child has the same opportunity, given their background, their own talents, their own particular skills, their own history, linguistically or otherwise, or in terms of challenges they may have developmentally. This program takes on the challenge of saying, "We will pay attention to what we've learned in terms of research about how we support our children to learn."

One of the public district school boards was taken over by this government. They called the person they sent in a "supervisor." He's a total dictator. He doesn't listen to anybody. His job is to make sure that the trustees, who struggled with this, who have tremendous salaries of \$5,000 a year—that they have not served their children in that area well because they would not balance the budget a further \$23 million, on a budget of hundreds of millions of dollars, because they said, "We cannot go

any further as custodians of quality education for our children.”

The people who would suffer the most are the children in special ed. The minister said, “No child will suffer.” They cancelled a program called Headstart. Do you know what Headstart is? It’s a program for five-year-olds. It’s a program to help kids who are having trouble enunciating and articulating what they are thinking. It has nothing to do with their intelligence; it’s a particular motor function. We know we can help these children at the beginning. They cancelled this particular program. Those kids will suffer for that and we will pay for it; so will that child and so will their family.

That is not education for all; this motion is. I ask everyone in the House to support it today.

1740

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is a pleasure for me to stand here today in tribute to the work that Dalton McGuinty and all the members of the Ontario Liberal caucus have done. While we have had this waft of complacency and sad commentary from the other side of the House, the Ontario Liberal caucus has been out visiting the schools in their ridings and in some of the ridings currently held by government members, because those seem to be the only ones that are truly focused on what matters here, prepared to put students first. Instead, what we have on the other side is a litany of excuses about the kinds of things they can’t do.

We know that in Etobicoke and in other places in the province there are members happy with the idea that private schools should get a preference. They are complacent and in fact thrilled, I guess. There’s a 54% increase in enrolment in private schools under this government. There’s an accomplishment they can claim. There’s something they can be proud of. That’s the direction they want us to go in: 430 schools closed, a lot of them rural schools in places like Grey-Bruce and Huron and so on. They’ve been shut down by this government because they don’t understand that you have to support public education, they’re so focused on having and delivering for private schools. So that is obviously the choice in front of the people of Ontario and it’s a choice made sharp and clear by Excellence for All.

It was sad to see one of the members opposite unable even to come up with his own second-hand information, reading third-hand from somebody who used to work for the Premier, talking about this plan and unable to reckon with it, as that person was in their column in the Toronto Star, on its merits, unable to come down to the level of talking about what’s good for kids. That’s what we need here today. We need people to understand that Excellence for All would put public education on the path for excellence, would deal with some of the worst things that have happened in the last number of years.

The government members opposite have talked a little bit about what they think they’ve gotten done. What they’ve gotten done is clear and plain on their own evidence. We have today in our schools 15,000 fewer teachers than we did compared to the standards of 1990,

15,000 fewer in the classroom. They’ve talked about and hidden behind statistics that don’t reveal the true state of affairs. The fact is they’re helping kids learn less. These lower standards, these lower-quality indicators that exist today are the true legacy of seven years of turmoil that delivered 24 million lost days in our schools to our students, 24 million days when they should have been learning but they weren’t because the government’s failed policies have brought on a level that is three times the lost days of the two previous governments combined.

That itself is a testament to the government’s priorities. They’re not interested in having public education succeed and having it be excellent. That’s why we didn’t see a single member opposite stand up there with their own ideas or say how they were going to make excellence work. In fact, we’ve had, sadly, trotted out by the member for Waterloo-Wellington—he ought to visit his schools, as I have recently, and see where there’s 30 kids in class and not talk about an early reading program.

They’re going to spend one third of the money they spend on early reading on the advertising they’re buying in this province shamelessly with education money to promote that program, taking it away from the kids who ought to be benefiting in Waterloo-Wellington. The class I was in was a grade 1 class with 30 kids in it, and that wonderful teacher could tell us by name which of the children could benefit from the smaller class size guarantee that we’re making in Excellence for All.

Instead of hearing about that from the members opposite, we hear some stale, worn, tired responses. What we don’t have is any idea about how to move forward. Move forward we must. Look at the results. They brought in a \$50-million testing program and what have they done? In five years they’ve huffed and they’ve puffed and they’ve cut and they’ve attacked and they’ve gone and blamed everyone. And what have they managed after five years? They’ve moved the reading scores in this province from 46% to 49%. They’ve gotten us and our children exactly nowhere, at a cost of lost opportunities for those kids.

Hon Mr Stockwell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I’m sure the member from Waterloo-Wellington would like to know the school that the member is—

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. Sit down.

Mr Kennedy: The fact is that under this government’s watch they talk about having a curriculum. They brought in a so-called new curriculum and it’s worth noting that there’s been one—

Hon Mr Stockwell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don’t think he heard me. I think he wanted to know what school he was speaking about in Waterloo-Wellington.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order. The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr Kennedy: Here is what they say at the District School Board of Niagara, looking at this wonderful curriculum some of these people try to hide behind as they celebrate their larger class sizes, the absence of inter-

national languages and the deduction of heritage programs, the kinds of things that really work in some schools. This is what they say in the Niagara school board, "The new curriculum, while itself a necessary change, was hurriedly put together, poorly planned, implemented in an unworkable fashion and grossly underfunded. The results show the students are frustrated beyond belief, parents have disengaged, teachers are overworked and continue to feel unappreciated, books are rare and resources are few." That is the true approach of the people opposite.

We have apparently, from the members—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Grey-Bruce-Owen Sound will come to order.

Mr Kennedy: In Grey-Bruce-Owen Sound they're closing schools because they're happy with this lack of accomplishment. For example, because of the way this curriculum has been brought in, 55% of the kids in grade 9 applied math failed that test, and they failed it because of an absence of help from the yammering members opposite. They'd rather spend money on TV ads on the national news than actually help these kids learn.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. If I have to warn the member again, he will be gone.

Mr Kennedy: Would there were one member opposite who would fight as hard to shut down—an opposition member. They would fight for the kids in their ridings and actually do something for them.

This is the message. They're afraid of Dalton McGuinty's education message because they know in their heart of hearts that they have not attended to the needs of their ridings. They know there's a 300% increase in people who pay for private tutors and they know each one of them. There aren't enough people who can afford tutors to be your voters in the next election. There are people who have gone missing in this, people who have paid the price, and they paid the price of a government unprepared to have the commitment to public education, unprepared to actually offer something to our schools but very prepared to see \$500 million diverted into private schools that each one of them voted for; each one of them prepared to put money for private individuals, for private schools, ahead of that for the public school system.

We look around and we see, for example, the member for Etobicoke Centre, who celebrates the fact that there's \$2,100 less for each one of his constituents' children in the school board. He was silent when they took away those services in that riding. They find themselves facing these enlarged class sizes, and special-needs kids no longer have education assistants in his schools.

Similarly, the member for Stoney Creek was quiet when in Hamilton they lost \$1,600 per student. There couldn't be a peep heard from that member, nothing at all. Nor could we hear from the member for Ottawa-Nepean sitting opposite there, not a single peep when the \$2,300 was cut. And when the school board said to the reasonable people of this province, "Have a look at what

you're doing. See whether or not our kids are winning out in this. Do you actually know whether kids are going forward?" the members opposite were quiet.

They won't be quiet much longer because we'll be in each of their ridings with this exact plan, Excellence for All, making sure that what the members across celebrate, \$50 million to \$80 million worth of paperwork that they want to see so that special-needs kids don't get help—that's what they're defending. They're spending \$50 million to \$80 million so that they can deny kids with autism, with Down syndrome, with a range of afflictions who have been succeeding with proper support in our schools—and not one person opposite is prepared to stand up and fight for those kids.

I ask the parents of this province, if they're not prepared to fight for conspicuous needs, if they're not prepared to fight for the kids whose needs are obvious, what are the chances that they're fighting for your kids? None at all.

I would say further that not only have they cost us 24 million in lost days with their policies of error, what the voters of Ontario, the parents and grandparents and the citizens of this province, need to know is that they've been prepared to sacrifice those kids. They've been prepared to put them in second and third place in their priorities. They've been prepared to sit there and not come up with a single idea.

We say the children are too valuable. We say we will start Best Start, engineered by my colleague Leona Dombrowsky. We will have public school choice, not the type ridiculed by the member opposite but the kind that Ernie Parsons made work in his school board for years on end. We will have a policy of education that will put Ontario first with its students and first in our prosperity in the future.

The Acting Speaker: Mr McGuinty has moved opposition day number 1.

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

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

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

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Dombrowsky, Leona	Patten, Richard
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Boyer, Claudette	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	McGuinty, Dalton	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	
Curling, Alvin	McLeod, Lyn	

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

			Nays		
Arnott, Ted	Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Eves, Ernie	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn	Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Beaubien, Marcel	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan	Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Wood, Bob
Bisson, Gilles	Hodgson, Chris	O'Toole, John	Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Young, David
Christopherson, David	Johns, Helen	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The		
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Prue, Michael	ayes are 28; the nays are 54.		
Churley, Marilyn	Klees, Frank	Runciman, Robert W.	The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.		
Clark, Brad	Kormos, Peter	Sampson, Rob	It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands		
Clement, Tony	Marchese, Rosario	Spina, Joseph	adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.		
Coburn, Brian	Martel, Shelley	Sterling, Norman W.	<i>The House adjourned at 1804.</i>		
DeFaria, Carl	Martin, Tony	Stockwell, Chris	<i>Evening meeting reported in volume B.</i>		
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.			
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.			
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David			

ERRATA

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
37	1837	2	48-49	Interjection: You're a bit old for that, aren't you?
37	1837	2	52	Interjection: Sorry, I couldn't resist.

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Peter Kormos, AL McDonald, Lyn McLeod
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Règlements et projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Garfield Dunlop,
Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy, Morley Kells, Rosario Marchese, Ted
McMeekin, Bill Murdoch, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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