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**Wednesday 18 June 2003**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Mercredi 18 juin 2003**

**Standing committee on  
estimates**

Ministry of Education

**Comité permanent des  
budgets des dépenses**

Ministère de l'Éducation

Chair: Gerard Kennedy  
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : Gerard Kennedy  
Greffier : Trevor Day

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ESTIMATESCOMITÉ PERMANENT DES  
BUDGETS DES DÉPENSES

Wednesday 18 June 2003

Mercredi 18 juin 2003

*The committee met at 1534 in room 151.*

## MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**The Vice-Chair (Mr Alvin Curling):** We will resume the estimates for the Ministry of Education. Just as a quick review, we have five hours and 21 minutes of estimates time left for the Ministry of Education. When we left off on Tuesday, we were just about at the rotation time for 20 minutes for the government side. I don't know if you want to comment, Madam Minister. Last time, you had raised a question in regard to the time you would be here beyond today and next Tuesday.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education):** As you know, Mr Curling, the estimates were to be completed today. We had 10 hours of estimates, so we had certainly planned for that, as had staff. Unfortunately, yesterday, unbeknownst to anybody, we brought all the staff over here and found out when we got here that there wasn't going to be an estimates meeting. Because of people arriving late for meetings and other things, it seems we have an extra 20 minutes. That means we're going to have to do estimates today and we're going to have to do it on Tuesday; however, for the 20 minutes or whatever is left over, if that needs to go on Wednesday, I will not be here. My deputy will be quite happy to be here, but I'm not going to be here.

**The Vice-Chair:** Are there any other comments on that? If provision is made that someone represents you for the remaining time, it will be up to the committee if they would like that. You don't necessarily have to be here, Madam Minister, for that remaining time.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** I just want to say that if the minister is not going to be here, for our purposes it won't be as useful—not because we don't like the deputy or others.

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** You had your chance yesterday.

**Mr Marchese:** I had my chance? It wasn't my problem the bill came forward for closure. What are you talking about?

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. What are you saying, then?

**Mr Marchese:** If she's here Tuesday, then we'll be very happy to go through with the whole proceeding next Tuesday, but I'm not crazy about—

**The Vice-Chair:** But she won't be here on Wednesday.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes. Personally I'm not crazy about continuing without the minister here.

**The Vice-Chair:** Any comments?

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** Only the point I made yesterday, Mr Chair, that if the government caucus wishes, it can normally accommodate the minister by relinquishing some of its time. That's how it has been handled in the past when there has been 15 or 20 minutes, but that's up to the government caucus. We would certainly agree to that, if that was something the government caucus wanted to do to not inconvenience the minister and the ministry. But again, I just put that forward yesterday as a suggestion.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** I appreciate that. I think we're making progress here. My only observation, and perhaps suggestion, would be, how much time would be left after next Tuesday at 6?

**The Vice-Chair:** Roughly 20 minutes.

**Mr O'Toole:** Oh, good. Why don't we just forgo the 20 minutes and continue on with the next level of business? Would that be appropriate? What I'm saying is the inconvenience, the inconsiderate thoughtlessness of whoever raised the order yesterday, even though it may have been a government initiative to call the legislation—you could have at least given the ministry notice. You knew what order was being called. Do you know what I'm saying? The 20 minutes: I would make a suggestion for the sake of compatibility and getting along that we forgo, and that next Wednesday we start with the next ministry in the estimates process.

**The Vice-Chair:** There are two suggestions on the floor. There's one suggestion from Mr Kennedy, who is saying that the government side could give up their 20 minutes today and then they would forgo it on Wednesday. Is that what I'm hearing?

**Mr Kennedy:** Yes. We might wish, though, to take this to subcommittee, because we're eating up some of the time now when the ministry could be attaining its time. Maybe we could have a subcommittee meeting tomorrow and determine this, because otherwise we're just eating up more time. What was 20 minutes will become half an hour. We're starting at 20 minutes to 4, right now.

**The Vice-Chair:** Let me just settle this with you. So you're not in agreement.

**Mr Kennedy:** I am in agreement that at some point, whenever the government wishes, they can relinquish the

time the ministry has owing, and I think that would balance it out, as far as I'm concerned. The third party can speak for itself.

**The Vice-Chair:** Let me just say this: I don't want a long discussion on this, because the fact is that it seems to me the government is not willing to give up its time, as you asked the other time. So we will proceed, and when the time comes, if the minister is not here, she doesn't have to be here for the last part of the estimates, but her representative could be here on behalf of the ministry.

Just one more comment and then we'll proceed.

**Mr Marchese:** I just want to recommend that we meet next Tuesday and that's it.

**Mr O'Toole:** Good. I agree with Rosario. Let's call the question.

**The Vice-Chair:** There's no question to call on this.

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes, call the question, that we just finish the regularly scheduled rotation next Tuesday.

**Mr Kennedy:** We're into delay here, Mr Chair.

1540

**The Vice-Chair:** We're going to proceed with the estimates. When it comes to next Wednesday, then we will deal with that. The government side has about 20 minutes.

**Mr O'Toole:** Pardon me, Mr Chair: I am putting forward a question, a recommendation, a motion that would say that the estimates hearings for the Ministry of Education be completed at the end of the time allocated, which is normally 6 o'clock, next Tuesday.

**The Vice-Chair:** So you're putting the question?

**Mr O'Toole:** I've asked for that question.

**The Vice-Chair:** That's the first time you put the question. We'll have to have a discussion. Does anybody want to—?

**Mr Marchese:** No discussion from me.

**The Vice-Chair:** Any discussion, Mr Kennedy?

**Mr Marchese:** He didn't hear the motion?

**Mr Kennedy:** No, I didn't hear the motion.

**The Vice-Chair:** Do you want to state the motion again, Mr O'Toole?

**Mr O'Toole:** That we conclude the estimates hearings for the Ministry of Education next Tuesday at 6 o'clock, the normal end.

**Mr Kennedy:** With all respect, Mr Chair, that's not a legal motion because we're under orders of the House to hear this ministry.

**The Vice-Chair:** What's that?

**Mr Kennedy:** We have to hear the ministry for a certain number of minutes.

**The Vice-Chair:** In this regard, we'd have to have unanimous consent to have that motion. Do we have unanimous consent, as put forward by Mr O'Toole?

**Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe):** Mr Chair, is there unanimous consent for the government to give up their 20 minutes and conclude at 6 o'clock on Tuesday? Would I have unanimous consent for that motion?

**Mr Kennedy:** If I could speak to the motion, Mr Chair?

**The Vice-Chair:** The motion is that the government gives up its 20 minutes?

**Mr Mazzilli:** Gives up their 20 minutes today.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'd like to ask the government to amend its motion to say that the government will relinquish whatever time is still owing at the end of Wednesday, as anticipated by the clerk. That will make sure that will end the estimates properly.

**Mr Mazzilli:** On Tuesday?

**Mr Kennedy:** On Tuesday.

**Mr O'Toole:** For clarification, how much time would that be?

**The Vice-Chair:** There are five hours and 21 minutes remaining on the estimates of the Ministry of Education.

**Mr O'Toole:** So it would be 21 minutes?

**The Vice-Chair:** We are eroding the time now—

**Mr Marchese:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I had the floor last Wednesday.

**The Vice-Chair:** You did and you concluded.

**Mr Marchese:** Sorry?

**The Vice-Chair:** It's finished. You had no more time.

**Mr Marchese:** I had 10 minutes of my 20 minutes. As far as I can remember, I thought I had 10 minutes.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** I did my whole 20? OK, thank you.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Would I have unanimous consent for the government to give up 20 minutes or thereabouts, but the estimates would conclude at the end of Tuesday at 6 o'clock?

**The Vice-Chair:** Do we have unanimous consent that the government would give up the remaining time?

**Mr Kennedy:** They give up the balance of the times. If that's the understood meaning of the motion, I'm happy to agree with it.

**Mr Marchese:** The balance of the time. Whatever it means, whatever it is, right?

**Mr Kennedy:** It's probably 30 minutes now.

**The Vice-Chair:** So I have unanimous consent on that.

The government side has 20 minutes—

**Mr O'Toole:** An uncompromising opposition. I just can't see—it's discouraging to find—

**The Vice-Chair:** Let's proceed.

**Mr Marchese:** It's not so bad, John.

*Interjection.*

**The Vice-Chair:** Is that a part of your 20 minutes, Mr O'Toole? Who's on here?

**Mr O'Toole:** There has been nothing but badgering the minister for two days. I'm just tired of it.

**The Vice-Chair:** You're on.

**Mr O'Toole:** I'm on? Thank you very much. I certainly want to share my time with the other members of this side. How much time do we have?

**The Vice-Chair:** You mean now? You've got about 19 minutes.

**Mr O'Toole:** Ninety?

**The Vice-Chair:** Nineteen.

**Mr O'Toole:** On this side?

**The Vice-Chair:** This said moment.

**Mr O'Toole:** Plenty of time.

I want to follow up on Dr Rozanski's report. I was, first and foremost, impressed with the prompt response of you, Minister, and our Premier to an issue that of course you, as Minister of Education, initiated—we, as government, had committed to review the fairness of the student-focused funding model—by the instant response and the clear evidence that you had listened and worked cooperatively to improve education, not just in Toronto but indeed across the province of Ontario, I really think that attentiveness—and relentless dedication, is how I would describe it. For you personally, I want to be on the record as complimenting you. The leadership, the facilitating role and the listening, consultative role that you've taken must have impressed most, if not all, of the teachers and their representatives in the province. More importantly, I think we are putting the students first for once in a long, long time.

We realized too when we were looking at this whole thing that the changing demographics, the enrolment, is one area. Between 1985 and 1995, enrolment was increasing only by 16%, while school board funding—and that's the history I'm familiar with—was increasing at an incomprehensible rate of 82%. That's the history. We're trying to create some stability for all of us. I think all members here, in fact even Mr Marchese, would probably agree that the Fair Tax Commission and the Royal Commission on Learning was put in place primarily to deal with this wildly unstable environment of funding education. David Cooke, to his credit, tried to deal with that "social contract," and I might say unsuccessfully.

It's interesting, despite the influx of irresponsible spending and not the corresponding increase in the number of students, that the achievements were down as well. It looked like there was no correlation between the investment and the outcomes. In fact, test results at that time were very topical and quite controversial when we looked at ourselves as a province and our performance in international testing, which is not just new to Canada, I might say, or to Finland, Sweden, Great Britain or other countries. Our students simply weren't keeping up.

I really have to go back and look at the thoroughness by looking at the whole governance structure from the Sweeney report and how we looked at the number of school boards and the excessive amount of spending. I think it's appropriate for me, personally, to stand up and say, "Look, there were 120 boards, and we were spending \$14 billion or just under \$14 billion—\$12.8 billion or something like that." Just put it in simple numbers. I always thought of it this way: it's \$12 billion, two million students, \$6,000 a student. If there's \$12 billion and we're only spending 10% on administration, that's \$1.2 billion. We eliminated half of the boards. We should have saved half that money, which would have been \$600 million roughly. Do you understand? We should have saved \$600 million. We eliminated half the boards, so half the administrative waste should have been eliminated. Sadly enough, it wasn't eliminated.

We went on and looked at the curriculum reform and introduced a number of the Royal Commission on Learn-

ing's recommendations. Special education was given some specific allocation of funding for the first time ever. Then Dr Rozanski, an eminent educator, came forward and left an update saying, "We've got the new curriculum. We've got strengthening the whole governance model of the education system; strengthening the student-focused funding model." The comment that I read from Dr Rozanski was quite supportive. His general comment was, "You're on the right track."

I've outlined my sense of this as representing the people of Durham and paying very close attention for a number of years—probably longer than you, Minister, but I'm much older too, so that explains that part. I know that you are always interested, and I'd like you to respond to the summary and Rozanski. What are the next steps?

1550

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As you know, our government during the past few years has taken steps to reform the education system to ensure that each student in the province, no matter where they live, has the opportunity to receive equal, fair and stable funding. That was why we introduced the student-focused funding formula in 1998. Before that time, depending on whether you were an assessment rich board or an assessment poor board, students were receiving different amounts of per-pupil funding, depending on whether or not they lived in a wealthy or less wealthy community. So the funding formula was introduced, and certainly I think enough time had elapsed that a year ago our government decided we should review the funding formula to see if it was meeting the objective of making sure that it was meeting the needs of the students in Ontario and that indeed the funding was fair, it was equitable and it was allowing for stability within the classroom.

We asked Dr Rozanski, a man who has long demonstrated a passion for students and education, to do the review. I'm very pleased to say that as a result of his consultation, which was very extensive—he was extremely well received; he was an excellent listener—one of the first responses that he had for the government was to share with us that certainly the funding formula was working. In other words, he validated the decision that our government had made that this was the appropriate mechanism to flow funding to the students in the province. He stated that because in meeting with people throughout the province there was pretty well unanimous agreement that this was a good funding formula; it was creating equity of resources and support to students.

We wanted to make sure, however, that not only did we have this validation of the funding formula, but that the recommendations he made, which were going to make the funding formula even better and which would make for an even stronger public school system in Ontario, were implemented.

If you remember, Mr O'Toole, within three days we actually announced funding as a result of his recommendations. We announced funding immediately of \$340 million for the 3% increase to the salary benchmarks,

\$250 million for special education and \$20 million to improve transportation. This was all part of a total of \$610 million that was announced three days after he reported in December. That was very significant.

We didn't stop there. We continued to move forward. We made another commitment in March of this year of \$625 million. There was \$66 million over three years for classroom resources such as textbooks, learning resources, classroom supplies and computers. There was \$50 million to support a rural education strategy. In fact, Dr Downey at the present time is doing further consultation to make sure that we flow that money to where it is needed. There was \$24 million to help address the higher costs that schools in small, rural and northern communities have, and also boards with declining enrolment. The unfortunate fact of life in the province is that enrolment is declining this year by about 2%. I would just hasten to add that despite the fact that it's declining by 2%, we're actually adding 8.8% more this year. That's an increase of \$1.1 billion this year over last year. So that's important, but let me continue.

We also announced \$50 million for students at risk, those students who obviously are struggling. It's an investment to support students in grades 7 to 12. There is \$75 million for school renewal to address pressing renewal needs. There is another \$20 million for transportation, so that's now a total of \$40 million, and another \$340 million on top of the first \$340 million for salaries for teaching and non-teaching staff, another 3% to the salary benchmark.

So you can see that we have accepted his recommendations; we agree with his recommendations. He said, "Flow \$1.8 billion over three years." We have indicated we're prepared to flow about \$2 billion, and I'm sure that we will exceed that amount. Not only that, people have been asking us for multi-year funding for a number of years now; they need to plan. So that has become a reality this year in the budget. We've said, "We will. We've heard you." Just as we heard the request to review the funding formula, we heard this request. I can tell you, we are going to be investing about \$2 billion over the next three years, and we are on track to not only meet Dr Rozanski's recommendation but to exceed it.

I can tell you that the increase this year to which I just referred, the \$1.1 billion or 8% increase, is the largest year-over-year increase under this government. It's a tremendous amount of money. If you take a look at the headlines these days in the newspapers throughout Ontario, boards are extremely happy with their allocations this year. They have extra money for special education teachers and resources for students. Certainly it's quite different. We're going to continue to work with our partners: our teachers, our trustees and our parents. We want to make sure that we build on this strong public education system in Ontario, that we continue to do everything we can.

The next steps over the next three years are to implement all those recommendations I've talked about and make sure we do everything we can to provide the best possible education to our students. But at the same time,

we're going to continue to consult with our stakeholders, because the reason we've been able to move forward on these recommendations and respond to the needs of students is that we're working in partnership with teachers, trustees and parents in order that we can provide students with the best possible education.

As you know, recent results demonstrate that our students are moving to the top of the class as a result of the new standards, the new curriculum and a similar marking system across the province. Everybody knows what to expect. Do you know what? Our students are responding. That's thanks to the hard-working teachers, the parental support and the hard work of the students themselves.

**Mr O'Toole:** I'm continuously impressed with the insights you have and with the large numbers that are being moved around. Sometimes in the media this still plays out as kind of a negative thing—it really does. In all honesty, even with the three boards that literally for political reasons, I believe, refused to balance their budgets, for a political agenda, and having been a trustee for two terms—I always like to review this because often there are parents listening, and I'm a parent. My wife is a teacher and I have five children. I watch this because I think education is the single most important contribution to each individual's life. It's the empowerment and the enrichment.

I would argue with you that there's simply not enough money in it, but you have to look at the economy. Do you know what I mean? I'm sort of saying that I'd love to see more money in education. I don't want Gerard Kennedy to think he's the only one, even though he was educated in a private school. I wasn't. I came from the separate school system. We were the poorest funded in Ontario. That's why I became a trustee. My father had been a trustee. When they got equity in education, in my boards, the two Catholic boards in my area—I have the numbers here, and I don't want to bore the public. They have more money and yet OECTA, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, is fighting you every step of the way on every reform to help children. The union has spoiled it.

My wife is a teacher, as you know, and my middle daughter is a high school teacher. She's now teaching in London, England, because they made a mess of her life because her father was John O'Toole, a provincial member of the Conservative government that had the courage to reform education for children so they would have equal opportunity in the world. They've received more funding, and secretly they accused the Toronto separate board chair, who is actually on the Liberal riding executive of Greg Sorbara, I think, or one of the leaders in the Liberal opposition—

**Mr Marchese:** Cordiano.

**Mr O'Toole:** Cordiano's riding, yes. Thank you very much, Mr Marchese. He watches this very closely too as a former trustee.

**1600**

I guess, technically, I would just say that he was fighting for the students. He was sick and tired of OECTA

working to rule, spoiling the basketball games, the extra-curricular and the enrichment, just spoiling it. Let's face it. I have no problem with them being on strike all summer long, but I do think that Canada and Ontario are in a better position. I think that you should feel, as a former educator and school trustee—I want to be on the record publicly as being so grateful for the leadership and commitment. Despite the criticism from OEETA, OSSTF has gone quiet. I'm not exactly sure; maybe it's because Earl Manners is running for the NDP, but they've gone quiet. I think we are on the right road. Many educators are coming around about the union and are telling me personally—I believe that we want to, and I know you do, respect them a lot more in our language and communication, recognize teacher excellence and get rid of the—in every workforce, including MPPs, there are slugs.

**The Vice-Chair:** Two minutes, Mr O'Toole.

**Mr O'Toole:** I want to make sure I leave time for my friend and partner here. All of the things I've said, rather emotionally and totally unscripted, are to compliment you on your leadership and commitment to education. Keep up the good work and keep the students foremost in your mind.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Thank you.

**Mr Arnott:** I have approximately two minutes left, Mr Chair?

**The Vice-Chair:** A little less than that.

**Mr Arnott:** I appreciate the time my colleague has offered me. I want to use the remaining time to make a point.

At a previous meeting of this committee—I think it was last week—the Liberal education critic made a statement when he said to the minister, “When you were chair of the school board in Waterloo region, you sponsored a resolution against funding private schools.” He went on to say, “Have you changed your mind against the funding of private schools since you were chair of the Waterloo board and passed a resolution against funding private schools?”

I've known the minister for 13 years, and prior to that I was well aware of her outstanding work as chair of the Waterloo regional school board. I don't recall her making a statement of that type and I would challenge the Liberal education critic, if he has some evidence of this charge he's made, to produce it to the committee.

This particular member, as we all know in the House, is sometimes prone to exaggeration, to say the least. Every time he does that, I'm afraid it impacts negatively on his credibility. I hope that if he has evidence of this charge, he would table it at the committee. If he has no such evidence, I hope he will apologize to the House for making an erroneous statement to this standing committee. That's the point I wanted to make. If the minister chooses to respond, I suppose she can.

**The Vice-Chair:** I presume when the time comes around for Mr Kennedy to respond, he may or may not choose to address that at that time.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm glad to see that the members opposite would like to take up so much of their time with consideration of me. I'm afraid I won't reciprocate.

Minister, I want to ask you about the Rozanski recommendations. I want to know specifically if you could table for the committee today a schedule of the details of how your government is meeting the specific recommendations Dr Rozanski made. Do you have such a schedule or table or something of that nature that could show us specifically which of the recommendations that you feel you've endorsed and any that you haven't? Is there something like that that could be tabled for the committee today? Something written is what I'm asking for. Is there something of that nature?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Certainly, Mr Kennedy, and I hope you will table the resolution Mr Arnott has referred to as well.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'll be happy to do that, Minister, but my question is about the Rozanski summary. Is it available?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We will certainly try to make that available.

**Mr Kennedy:** Any idea, Minister, how quickly that could be available? Could it be available for this discussion?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll ask the deputy.

**Ms Sue Herbert:** We'll obviously go back and look to see what we have that's going to be available.

**Mr Kennedy:** Having made the request before in writing to the ministry, about a month ago, I was hoping it might be available for these discussions. If it is, I'll certainly look forward to utilizing it.

In the absence of that, I want to ask the minister, are there any other responses to the Rozanski recommendations that you are planning to make at this time? Are there any other announcements, any other commitments that you as Minister of Education or your government in general are prepared to make in direct response to the Rozanski report?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think we've indicated that we're going to be responding to the recommendations over the course of the next three years, so between now and that time period we will be specifically making further announcements.

**Mr Kennedy:** Then I'm wondering, Minister, if you could help reconcile some of the statements you made again today and at other times, and also repeated in the throne speech and so on. On the one hand, you're saying there is a commitment on your government's part to implement all of the Rozanski report. You're suggesting you have committed as much money as Dr Rozanski has asked for. You made that statement in Hansard on May 27, you made it in the Kitchener-Waterloo Record on March 28, and you made it, I believe—if I'm paraphrasing, I apologize—again today when you said, “Dr Rozanski asked for \$1.8 billion, and we're committing \$2 billion.”

The inference you're drawing for the people of Ontario is that you have already made commitments that

either match or exceed the totality of Dr Rozanski's recommendations. Is that a correct inference to be drawn from what you've said at those various times?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We've made it very clear that we recognize the request that was made by Dr Rozanski, and we are committing about \$2 billion.

**Mr Kennedy:** So would you care to respond to the inference you've made at this and other times that you have responded in whole to Dr Rozanski's report? You have used that \$2 billion against a number from his report, \$1.8 billion, to suggest that you have met or exceeded all of his recommendations. I'm wondering if that's a fair inference to be drawn from what you've been saying.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We have indicated our endorsement and support for the report. We have not yet implemented all of the recommendations, as I have said repeatedly. Dr Rozanski recommended that they be implemented over three years. We endorse his report, and our plan is to implement the recommendations over three years.

**Mr Kennedy:** Let me ask you about that, Minister. Essentially what you've done is you have made commitments to less than one third of Dr Rozanski's report, over any year, in fact. I want to ask you if you recognize a distinction. Dr Rozanski made a set of recommendations for benchmark changes and for investments. They total \$1.7 billion, and then by the time this year comes around, there's another \$70 million to be added, for an approximate \$1.8 billion.

Do you recognize those recommendations as separate and distinct from any annual cost pressure or salary increases? Do you see the \$1.8 billion as separate and apart from the salary and cost increases that he also recommended should be made?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'll ask Mr Hartmann to come up with Mr Gooch and respond to the request for further information and detail.

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm not requesting more detail, Minister. I'm asking if you personally recognize a distinction on that principle. If I don't get an answer, I'd like to move on.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Hartmann is quite happy to respond to that particular question.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, unfortunately for Mr Hartmann—because I know he'd be happy to assist us in any of the detail—I'm asking a general question. I'm wondering if you personally draw a distinction between the catch-up recommendations that Dr Rozanski made—for example, in table 1.1, appendix I, of the report—and the annualized salary and cost pressure increases, if you see those as different recommendations.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Chairman, is there some part of our endorsement that the Liberal critic for education doesn't understand?

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, if you don't recognize the difference, then you can get away with some of the statements that you've been making. You've been saying \$2 billion, when, unless you're prepared to engage this par-

ticular question, it could easily be seen that that statement would end up misleading the public—perhaps not intending to. This is your chance to clarify.

There is a request from Dr Rozanski to provide basic services to students that are missing, as of August of last year, of \$1.7 billion, becoming \$1.8 billion by August of this year. He said explicitly that those should not include any responses for cost pressures or inflation on an annual basis. I'm asking you, as the Minister of Education, do you recognize that distinction drawn by Dr Rozanski or not?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Hartmann would be happy to respond to the question if there's some need for further detail. Again, I don't know what part of the endorsement the Liberal critic for education doesn't quite understand.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I wonder if the clerk could bring you this table and maybe we could sharpen the discussion a bit. It is a political answer, and handing it off to the officials doesn't give the accountability the people of this province deserve. I have copies for everyone here.

What I have as a table, in front of you shortly, is this exact distinction: the catch-up that Dr Rozanski asked for. His report said you're underfunding Ontario students to the tune of \$1.7 billion, and his table 1.1 says exactly how much per grant should be put in.

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Let me just refer to the first line, foundation grant. He requested \$477 million. You have committed to \$66 million over three years. That's only 14% of what he was looking for. That's the specific grant that would bring back music teachers, phys ed teachers and smaller class sizes and start to address some of the very specific needs in classrooms.

Minister, you haven't responded to this specific request and I'm wondering if you would care to share with us why it is not important to you that there be quality teaching in the Ontario classrooms. Can you respond to that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would refer the member to the multi-year budget process that we have set in place and, again, if he would like some further detail, Mr Hartmann is quite prepared to respond.

**Mr Kennedy:** I have paper F from the budget process in front of me here, and what it shows is exactly what I'm asking you, as Minister of Education, to respond to. It shows very clearly that your commitment over the next three years is for only \$500 million next year, \$500 million the year after that, and \$400 million the year after that. That's what budget F says. It's shaping up very clearly that that's not enough money to deal with Dr Rozanski. You simply do not have enough commitment from your cabinet colleagues, from the Premier, to deal with Dr Rozanski's request.

I have in front of me a copy of Dr Rozanski's request, line by line, by foundation, by special education, by language, and I'd like to ask you specifically why you've rejected or failed as of yet to respond to these specific recommendations. You've acknowledged earlier that your response to Rozanski is incomplete, but I'm won-



dering, on these specific lines, if you could tell us why, for example, you don't believe the foundation grant should have been caught up. Obviously, you're not on track to respond to that. You don't have the money put aside.

Can you tell us why? It's the biggest single recommendation he made—\$477 million—and you've only committed to \$66 million. Minister, would you like to tell us why you won't increase the foundation grant that Dr Rozanski asked for?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Again, we have endorsed the recommendations. We are going to be implementing the recommendations over the course of the next three years. If the member would like further detail, Mr Hartmann is prepared to be responsive.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, are you saying that—

**The Vice-Chair:** Just one minute, please. May I just ask, Mr Kennedy, will you be prepared for Mr Hartmann to give a comment? If you find it not informative, we can move on. Because the minister—

**Mr Kennedy:** I was hoping very much for the minister's opinion. These are very essential questions. They're political questions, and she is the Minister of Education. I was hoping she might answer the question, Mr Chair. I have had the benefit of a briefing from ministry officials and I was hoping the minister might answer the question.

**The Vice-Chair:** I hate to interfere at this time, but the fact is that it seems to me the minister has repeatedly stated the same thing and asked if Mr Hartmann could say something. Within his statement, if there is anything there—

**Mr Kennedy:** Mr Hartmann, would you care to tell us why the minister won't authorize or didn't fight for any money for the foundation grant? Would you care to give us that insight, in the minister's silence?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Chairman, with all due respect, I don't think there's any point in having a blame game in there. If you want to ask your question, Mr Kennedy, go ahead and ask it.

**Mr Kennedy:** I've done it, Minister, and you've refused to answer on three occasions. If you continue to waste this committee's time, that's your choice, but I'm looking for an answer.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** You have been given answers. If you don't like the answers, that's too bad.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, your answer is not to the question. It brings disrespect on your entire ministry. You have a straightforward table in front of you. It asks you about something vitally important to the students of this province about their teaching. You claim to endorse the Rozanski report and yet your answers today turn that into a joke. The Rozanski report is about serious services that students don't have today.

You can either stand up and do your duty and respond to those questions or, if you like, defer to your officials, but the people of this province deserve to know why you've rejected some of the recommendations that Dr Rozanski put forward.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Chairman, with all due respect, we have indicated that we have endorsed the Rozanski report; we have indicated we're going to be implementing the report over the course of the next three years. I'm not quite sure what it is that the member, with all due respect, doesn't get.

**Mr Kennedy:** Well, Madam Minister, it is disrespectful to me as a member and to anyone interested in these proceedings that you won't answer a direct question about a \$477-million recommendation. Your blanket endorsement doesn't add up to very much. You have committed on paper, through your press releases, \$529 million against a deficit that the children of this province have of \$1.7 billion. That's not a commitment.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would just remind the member that I see \$1.6 billion being promised by your party over the next four years. We have committed \$2 billion over the next three years.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, you're mixing apples and oranges. You're talking about cost increases that have nothing to do with our commitment. Our commitment is over and above; yours isn't. Right now, I'm looking at the chart that Dr Rozanski recommended. It has on it very specific recommendations that many parents and many children around the province depend upon.

There's a very specific question on the table: will you answer why the foundation grant recommendation has been ignored by you, or do you have some other expectation that you'd like to put on this? You're saying that you're only going to put forward 14% of the dollars Dr Rozanski said are needed for the foundation, for the basic education of every student in this province. You're denying this, and I think you have a right and an obligation to answer why you're denying these dollars to these children.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** If I recall correctly, I think the \$1.6-billion commitment was made prior to the release of the Rozanski report, so I'm not sure that it's additional money.

**Mr Kennedy:** Again, Madam Minister, I'd like you to address the question of the foundation grant. Will you do that? If you won't, will you answer the question about the \$107 million that has yet to be committed in special education: the structural money to catch up the benchmarks in special education, the \$88 million for that, as well as the \$19 million that Dr Rozanski said should be in the SEPA grant. Will you tell us why those dollars have not received your endorsement, or have you been unable to convince your cabinet colleagues that that should be put back into schools? Let's be clear, Minister: the Rozanski report caught you. It caught the entire Harris-Eves government. You took over \$2 billion out of schools, by very common calculation, and Dr Rozanski says you have to put back \$1.7 billion. This is not an option; this is not you being nice and generous.

Minister, will you answer specific questions: the foundation grant for teachers—the most essential component—will you tell us why you won't do that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** With all due respect, we commissioned Dr Rozanski to give us recommendations as to

how we could invest more money in the educational system. For the member to say that he “caught” us or anything else is misleading and inappropriate. We asked for the review.

**Mr Kennedy:** Well, here’s what he had to tell you—

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. I’ve heard two kind of accusations. I’d rather we didn’t use the word “misleading.” Mr Kennedy mentioned something like that, and the minister—

**Mr Kennedy:** I was careful to say we didn’t want it to be misconstrued. I’ve not said that the minister is misleading; I’m asking the minister very direct questions that she is avoiding. I’d enjoin your assistance, Chair, in having her say, I guess, that she doesn’t want to answer them—that she’s afraid of these particular questions—or that for some reason she doesn’t want to answer why she’s failed to get these dollars for the kids of this province.

Minister, it’s exactly the chart that Dr Rozanski gave you in December. It’s the one that you said you would persuade your cabinet colleagues: “It’s important to make sure that we support students. We’re going to do exactly what Rozanski has asked us to do.” Right in front you, Minister, line by line, is what Dr Rozanski has asked you to do. You commissioned the report because the parents and other people in this province forced you to, because the inadequacy was making boards go bankrupt across the province. Now they’re out there treading water, and they want to know, is there a serious interest here in doing the whole Rozanski report, or is this just pre-election show business? Which is it, Minister? Are you going to address the foundation grant or are you not?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Chairman, I would just like to share with you some of the comments that were made as a result of our announcement.

Annie Kidder, April 2003: “On April 11, the Minister of Education released grants to school boards that included an increase. The increase will be sufficient to cover inflation and salary increases.”

Lynn Ziraldo, Chairman of the Minister’s advisory council on special education, December 12, 2002: “This announcement,” meaning special education, “will have a significant and positive impact on the delivery of special education services and programs and will assist boards in meeting the needs of all students with special needs.”

Bill Bryce, December 12, 2002—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, with all respect, could you please use the government’s time to read whatever quotes you like.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** —“The new funding announcement will help us address the shortfalls in that area.”

**Mr Kennedy:** I know you’re trying to avoid the answer, Minister, but you have not addressed the foundation question. There’s \$477 million recommended. It’s the first line, the first recommendation. Your government has only announced \$66 million in response. You’re avoiding 86% of what Dr Rozanski said is needed for the basic foundational education of children in this province.

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I’m asking you on behalf of children and parents and teachers and some of the groups out there who are hopeful, but they’re getting less hopeful by the day because they hear nothing from you, no straight answers. Minister, the foundation grant: do you agree with Dr Rozanski’s recommendation? If so, why is it you haven’t made any substantial commitment to see it implemented?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Again, I’m not quite sure what the member does not understand. Our government has endorsed the recommendations. We are moving forward over the course of three years to implement the recommendations. There is multi-year funding that will be provided to school boards, and we have made a commitment already of about \$2 billion. I can tell you that we have been very, very responsive, and we have been very, very quick in responding to the recommendations of Dr Rozanski.

**Mr Kennedy:** Well, you’ve not been quick in responding to my question. For the sixth time you’ve refused to address the most basic question. Why can’t you address the foundation grant? Alternatively, if you want to claim the \$2 billion, then why don’t you tell the people here assembled what you mean by that? You’re including money that you gave before the Rozanski report. That was already included. You’re including money that was given—and I have it down on this table in front of you, as keep-up.

The money you gave for salaries—let’s refer to the Rozanski report. Did Dr Rozanski intend the money for salaries to be included? Here’s what he said on page 23: “I estimate that the ... benchmark costs ... will total \$1.08 billion, excluding the additional cost of updating salaries and benefits...” Minister, let me ask you a very direct question: does the \$2 billion you’re claiming happen to include the updating of salaries and costs? Does it, for this year and for last year? Minister, do you understand that question? Is it very clear?

**The Vice-Chair:** Give her a chance to respond.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We have committed to the recommendations. We’ve endorsed the report, unlike your leader, who said on December 10 when he was asked by Christina Blizzard, “So you’re committing to everything in Rozanski’s report?” and he said, “No, I didn’t say that.” Well, I can tell you that we have endorsed the recommendations. We are going to be moving forward over three years, and we have made a commitment.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, you give no such commitment. You’ve made no commitment.

**The Vice-Chair:** Thank you very much. That concludes the—

**Mr Kennedy:** Here is \$1.2 billion you haven’t committed to.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Marchese, you have 20 minutes.

**Mr Marchese:** I will get back to this, by the way, just as a reminder. I read from this last time in the last 10 minutes I had. Evidently, I thought I had 10 left, but I didn’t.

**The Vice-Chair:** My, how time flies when you’re having fun.

**Mr Marchese:** I know.

It's called The Ontario Alternative Budget—Telling Tales out of School. You might have had a chance to pick up a copy; I'm not quite sure.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No, we didn't.

**Mr Marchese:** You didn't. Oh, well. I know, time isn't always—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think Mr Mackenzie is one of your supporters.

**Mr Marchese:** I hope he is. I'll get back to that report, because there's a lot of interesting stuff. You see, I'm not very smart, but Hugh is—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you know what, Mr Marchese? I think you're very clever.

**The Vice-Chair:** There you are.

**Mr Marchese:** That could be, but I want to ask a question before I get to that, because I don't want to forget it; we're running out of time.

The Metro separate school teachers were locked out for 12 days, and they're very curious to find out how much money was saved or collected by the province or the school board. Do we know?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No, Mr Marchese. We don't have that number yet, but obviously there will probably be some savings.

**Mr Marchese:** OK. So the province collects this money, keeps this money, or no?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm going to ask the deputy to respond.

**Ms Herbert:** In a situation like this, Mr Marchese, what happens is that the board reports to the ministry the cost savings associated with the strike. It can propose a plan for how that money is utilized, and the ministry looks at that plan. I would tell you, just to give you a sense of what's happened in the past, that in the last situation we were in like this, I think the savings were turned to the ministry. I think I'm correct on that.

**Mr Marchese:** So any board can propose a plan on how that money could be used, and in the past boards didn't propose a plan? The money went straight to the province. Is that what I understood?

**Ms Herbert:** No. Boards may propose a plan or may not.

**Mr Marchese:** But you said to me that on past occurrences, the province kept the money. Isn't that odd.

**Ms Herbert:** In my recollection, it is normal that the grant payments are returned to the ministry.

**Mr Marchese:** Ah, normally, they are returned to the ministry. But a board, any board, under those circumstances could propose a plan that you would review and then you would say, "OK, it sounds reasonable. We would spend that money this way or not."

**Ms Herbert:** Generally, what happens is that the money comes back to us but they have to offset additional costs. So if they've incurred costs in a strike situation, they will propose a plan that takes their additional strike costs and proposes a payment system out of their savings. That's what they have to present to us.

**Mr Marchese:** The plan would include what costs they might have had as a board because of this, and then you might say, "OK, we might recompense you for that?"

**Ms Herbert:** Out of your cost savings.

**Mr Marchese:** Out of the \$13 million in savings.

**Ms Herbert:** If they saved \$10 million and they incurred costs by making these among the staff—

**Mr Marchese:** They could deduct. Right.

**Ms Herbert:** —of \$2 million, then they may.

**Mr Marchese:** But they couldn't propose the use of the other money in terms of how it could be used for the boards, students, teachers; or could they?

**Ms Herbert:** No, they can't.

**Mr Marchese:** They can't. So there we have it. The money doesn't go back to the board, but it can propose or suggest a plan or at least say, "Here are our costs incurred," and the savings would be from whatever money was saved from the lockout of those 12 teachers. OK. I think that's pretty clear.

Back to the report, the Ontario Alternative Budget. He's an economist, you see, and I'm not. I'm not very good at numbers, I really am not, so I have to refer to people like him, because he's better at it. He said—and I'll go slow, because we've got 20 minutes; we'll take our time with this:

"Rozanski made" a number "of recommendations and called for substantial reinvestment in public education" etc. "If you're going to control education funding using a centralized formula"—which you were using; you don't deny that—"you have to make sure that you keep the benchmarks that drive the formula up to date." You probably agree with that too, right? I suspect you would.

By the way, before I get into that, you said that you will continue consulting. What kind of consulting are you going to do that hasn't already been done?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** There were some further recommendations that had been made by Dr Rozanski regarding governance. We're presently consulting on French language and special education.

**Mr Marchese:** Because we didn't consult enough on special ed through Dr Rozanski?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you know what, Mr Marchese? I think you always need to continue consultation.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, sure.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Just, as you know, we're reviewing the curriculum. We're going to be starting in the fall with the math curriculum. We've got to make sure that we are responding.

**Mr Marchese:** No problem, except I recall you saying that Dr Rozanski was thorough.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** He was.

**Mr Marchese:** He consulted with thousands of people, probably. I don't know how more thorough it could be, but there are still further consultations in some areas he touched on.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's right. That's why we're doing the rural strategy consultation under Dr Downey right now, in order to best determine how we flow the \$50 million.

**Mr Marchese:** But we wouldn't be reconsulting on the same issues, obviously.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No.

**Mr Marchese:** Because we've done enough, right?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** He has made some basic recommendations, but as you can appreciate, it was such a comprehensive and large review of the whole formula, there were some specific areas that he thought required more specific consultation with those specific stakeholders.

**Mr Marchese:** I got the impression from other people who have spoken to ministry staff that we were going to reconsult, again, from the beginning, and I thought, good heavens, how exhausting that would be. Anyway, I'll wait for you.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** All right. Did you have a further question?

**Mr Marchese:** No, that's OK. I just made a comment. You let me know when you're busy having to consult and I'll just stop.

"All of Rozanski's recommendations flow from this basic message. Rozanski recommended: increases in funding to bring benchmarks up to date." We agree with that, right? You support the recommendations. New Democrats certainly do, by the way.

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**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes. We've endorsed the recommendations.

**Mr Marchese:** But the specific point about this one, "increases in funding to bring benchmarks up to date": you support that, right?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We've supported his recommendations. We endorse—

**Mr Marchese:** Right. And you support "annual reviews of benchmarks to ensure that they reflect current costs"? Because that's what he recommends as well.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes. I think you need to continue to take a look at economic growth, any federal support, and you need to keep taking a look at where things are at.

**Mr Marchese:** Economic growth and federal support?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** Gee, you never said that when we were in power, and we had a recession. Do you remember that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I remember the recession.

**Mr Marchese:** I remember when we were there, and Stockwell—I don't think you said it, actually.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I don't think I did.

**Mr Marchese:** But you remember Stock and the Premier and Gary Carr who used to say, not to me but to others, "You've got the wheels. You don't have a revenue problem; you've got a spending problem." Do you remember that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I do.

**Mr Marchese:** Right. And you used to say, when we used to attack the federal government, both Tories and Liberals, because they were both in power—and we were in an economic recession. We were saying, "Please don't cut us off. We need your money." And do you remember

your people saying, "You haven't got a revenue problem; you've got a spending problem"? Remember that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you know what? If you say it happened, I believe you.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, trust me. So I get worried when you say "depending on revenues," because you wouldn't be worried about recessions, would you? It wouldn't affect you, would it?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No. Fortunately, Mr Marchese, we've actually seen new growth of over one million new jobs.

**Mr Marchese:** OK, so the economy will be great; that's not a problem. But you don't depend on the federal government. We didn't depend on them when we were in serious trouble and without any money. In a good economy, you certainly are not whining about wanting more from the feds, are you?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We'd like to see some money to help us through the SARS situation.

**Mr Marchese:** For sure, but what about us? When we were in government we had a recession and you didn't help me out.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would have.

**Mr Marchese:** But you didn't. You said, "You've got the wheels. You're driving the limousine. You're in power. Forget about accusing the feds." I'm just reminding you, it's inconsistent, right? Just be careful.

Let me move on. Then they talk about "new investments to address areas in which the funding formula was clearly inadequate; and periodic (every five years) reviews of the appropriateness of the benchmarks themselves." You agree with that one.

"After an encouraging start—announcements of new funding totalling \$610 million within 72 hours of the release of the report—the government's response turned into an exercise of political spin." You don't agree with that last comment, but that's what he's saying.

"Both before and after the release of the Magna budget, a steady stream of photo op announcements has highlighted specific areas in which the funding formula was to be enhanced. In each of these announcements, the government claimed to be taking one more step towards full implementation of the Rozanski recommendations."

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's true. We have been and we will be, over three years.

**Mr Marchese:** "When you look behind the spin to the numbers, however, it becomes clear that the government has in fact repudiated the Rozanski report's central message.

"The funding numbers released in the March financial statement were the first hint that what the government had in mind was a great deal less than what Rozanski had called for. In its three-year funding projection, the statement revealed a third-year funding target of \$16.2 billion, \$1.5 billion short of the \$17.7 billion that would have been required for full implementation of the Rozanski recommendations.

"Indeed, the government's projections will leave funding of elementary and secondary education further behind

Rozanski's standard at the end of the three-year 'phase-in period' than it was when Rozanski was appointed to review the system in June, 2002."

Let me just cover a few other areas.

"However, it was only after the full package of funding detail (the general legislative grants) for 2003-04 was released quietly late on the eve of the Easter weekend that the full extent of the government's departure from Rozanski was revealed," he says.

"A board-by-board and grant-by-grant analysis of the government's funding announcement for 2003-04 shows a shortfall of \$1.4 billion compared with the amount that would be required for full implementation of the Rozanski recommendations. If Rozanski's benchmark updates were phased in over three years, as he suggested, the analysis shows 2003-04 funding \$666 million short of what would be required in the first year of a three-year implementation plan."

"If Rozanski's funding model is the target, as the government" claims, "the amounts announced for this year and projected for the next two years fall ... short of that target."

Do you agree with that, by any chance?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you know what? I understand what you're saying and actually one of the other areas where consultation is going to be continuing is in the review and updating of the benchmarks. As you probably know, Mr Marchese, we have made significant progress in increasing the funding benchmarks, as was recommended: for example, \$680 million in increases to the salary benchmarks; \$66 million for textbooks and learning materials; \$40 million for transportation; \$25 million for school renewal benchmark.

Further benchmark increases will happen over the next two years, but as you know, Dr Rozanski recommended we consult with the sector in order to "develop mechanisms for annually reviewing and updating benchmarks in the funding formula and for conducting"—I'm quoting from him—"a more comprehensive overall review of the funding formula every five years."

That was recommendation 3. So we recognize that we need to develop a mechanism to annually review and update, OK? So we're not finished, and that's one of the other consultations that will begin shortly.

**Mr Marchese:** I appreciate that. I think the point he makes is that you're already falling behind, that you may be looking at that, but if you're not putting money now in terms of updating the benchmarks, you're really going to be behind by the time you get there. If they get elected, boy, are they in trouble, and you'll be in trouble too because you won't have any money, and they won't have any money either because they're operating on the same basis as you are.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Will you have money?

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, because, you see, you accuse them of taxing people. They don't want to tax anybody yet. Wait until they get elected; then they'll have to deal with that. But that's a different problem because they'll have to cut services, like you, or raise taxes, like them.

You won't do that; you won't increase taxes; you'll just cut services. They'll have a problem because cutting more services is going to be complicated for them. They'll have to increase taxes or user fees somehow. We say we're going to tax the very people who send their kids to Havergal, where it's \$20,000 or \$22,000 a year. The people your tax cuts are helping have got loads of money from me and the rest of these fine people. We want some of that back. So yes, we would tax some of those folks. If they're earning over 100,000 bucks, we say give some money back. It would only be a couple of hundred bucks. I'm sure they're not going to be unhappy to give a couple of hundred dollars back. Would you, John?

**Mr O'Toole:** Sure, absolutely.

**Mr Marchese:** He would give it back. I'm sure you would too, Minister, because you are earning around \$100,000 and it won't hurt you—before you get to another matter, let me get on to the other points.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No, I think this—

**Mr Marchese:** I haven't asked the question.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm not going to respond to what you've just talked about, but it's good. I guess we're talking about this budget and we're talking about the funding. What we have to make abundantly clear is the fact that the budget announced a funding floor for our education partners. It didn't talk about a funding ceiling. I think that's really important. It didn't announce the funding ceiling; it announced the floor, OK?

**Mr Marchese:** I understand that too, but let me go on because I need your reaction to this economist.

"More important, it is clear from its statements in recent weeks that the government is not even aiming at that target. With the exception of the allocation for teacher salaries"—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Textbooks, transportation, school renewal.

**Mr Marchese:** "... the government has been careful to characterize its funding changes as new investments, rather than as funding increases to bring benchmarks up to date." That's a good point, I think.

"The message that the government is not interested in adjusting benchmarks to reflect costs has been reinforced in ministry briefing documents made public after the GLG announcement. In these briefing notes the government makes it clear that it is not funding catch-up for benchmarks that were allowed to fall behind..."

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's not true, Mr Marchese. As I just mentioned before, the salaries, the textbooks, the transportation, school renewal, those were all increasing the funding benchmarks.

**Mr Marchese:** I'm not sure that's catch-up. It's a couple of dollars you put in, but in terms of what you would have to do to get to where Rozanski recommends, you're very behind. That's what he's talking about.

**1640**

It's "clear that it is not funding catch-up for benchmarks that were allowed to fall behind cost increases, and

that it does not intend to fund automatic increases in benchmarks in response to cost increases in the future.

“That refusal to acknowledge the importance of keeping benchmarks current is a lot more than a subtle shift in political messaging. It is a repudiation of the fundamental” message of Rozanski.

“That repudiation is evident in the government’s silence on those recommendations in his report to which Rozanski did not attach specific dollar figures. Rozanski highlighted key areas in which he believed a more fundamental assessment of benchmarks would be required, most notably the grant for pupil accommodation, the grant which compensates boards for the higher costs associated with children at risk ... and the transportation grant.

“To bring the learning opportunities and the school operations grants alone up to the levels recommended by the government’s own expert panels in 1997 would add over \$300 million to the (increased but not yet realized) funding levels recommended by Rozanski.

“It must be emphasized that the problems with these benchmarks identified by Rozanski did not emerge over time after the introduction of the formula. These problems result directly from decisions by the government to ignore the advice of its expert panels that it had appointed in 1997, and impose cuts. Indeed, the cuts implicit in the government’s original underfunding in these areas make up a substantial proportion of the \$500 million that was cut from elementary and secondary education funding when the formula was introduced.”

There are a few other points. Do you have any reaction to what I’ve read so far?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would just tell you that further benchmark increases are going to come over the next two years.

I would say just one more time that we have increased the funding benchmarks in the funding formula, as recommended by Dr Rozanski: the \$680-million increase to the salary benchmark, \$66 million for textbooks and learning materials, \$40 million for transportation and \$25 million for school renewal.

As I said to you as well, we’re going to be setting up a review to develop mechanisms for an updating and review of the benchmarks in the funding formula, and that consultation still has to take place.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr O’Toole.

**Mr O’Toole:** Again we’ll be sharing our time. I would almost seek unanimous consent to give Mr Marchese some more time, if it wasn’t my time I was going to give away.

**The Vice-Chair:** You’re asking for unanimous consent to give—

**Mr O’Toole:** No. You missed the last part—unless it was my time I was giving away.

**The Vice-Chair:** It’s your time now, though.

**Mr O’Toole:** It was quite entertaining. I think the most striking compliment to Mr Marchese and to the minister is how amicable the discussion and sharing of information was. I think that’s what this committee is

about. In substance, it clearly spoke to me about the equity issue in education. I’m going back to that theme: the equity issue. I always look at my own riding, where I’m elected by the people to serve them beyond the partisan aspect. Once the election is over with, I’m busy working with all the trustees, councillors and citizens, trying to find the best possible access to resources.

I’m just looking at a report here. I think it was provided by your ministry, which I want to compliment. You always get me timely and accurate information.

If I look at the Durham Catholic District School Board, their funding increase for 2003-04 is going up 3.7%, while their enrolment is going down 1.4%. I could say that every single year, despite what I read in the Toronto Star or the Metroland papers, which are owned by the Star—the editorial bias is always throughout all of them. A lot of people are weaned on this stuff. It’s basically the Liberal briefing notes. That’s how I refer to it. The Toronto Star is like the Liberal briefing notes. Gerard’s or Dalton’s questions are usually in the editorial for the Star that day. But Dalton is usually not there. I don’t think he’s up to the job.

Anyway, the other one, Durham District School Board, went up 7%—that’s sizable—and the enrolment is down 1.9%.

The Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board has a new director of education. She was on the Royal Commission on Learning too—Avis Glaze, formerly with the York board. Their funding went up 6.9% and the enrolment is down 4.1%. They have lots of geographical problems too. It’s a big geographical area and there are lots of problems there.

The Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board—wow. Theirs went up 9.2%, and their enrolment went down 1.4%. They’re widely spread out as well, and quite a good school system. Trillium-Lakelands board—an 8.3% increase in funding, minus 3.1% in enrolment.

Somebody has to get through to this. I go to public meetings on education and people are screaming. With all the information they have—and I say this in the most humble way that I possibly can—generally they’re not prepared to listen to the truth. I don’t know where the money is going when it gets there, I say to them—OK, I’m going back. Remember I said it was \$12 billion, two million students, \$6,000 per student. Now it’s almost \$16 billion, and there are fewer students. If there was two million, then you’ve at least gone up to \$8,000 per student. Somewhere in there lies the fact—

*Interjection.*

**Mr O’Toole:** No, it’s a fact. That’s the truth of it all. When I was a trustee some years ago, I saw that our students were getting about \$4,000 per student, and in other richer areas, where they had the SkyDomes and the Hummingbird Centre, they were getting \$8,000 per student. My kids were, at the ends of their careers, going to be applying to the same universities, to the same jobs, and I believed they needed the same opportunity. Thank you for doing it. Now, are they happy? No. Unions are

mad as hell, and you'll have a hard time fighting that one. But what you're putting on the record here is clear.

I always go back to the fundamentals. I always thought that the Royal Commission on Learning was all about this problem. The NDP had this problem, and they called in an eminent group of people to conduct the royal commission, not because they were trying to waste taxpayers' money; it was because the system was in fringing chaos. In fact, before Gerard was in Ontario and took over the food bank—they had a serious problem when I was a trustee. The teachers' pension fund was the issue. At that time, the agreement amounted to about \$600 million a year had to go as the provincial contribution to the pension. The teachers' pension fund had a huge surplus. They had tons of money. They were buying the SkyDome and the Toronto Maple Leafs. Lord knows what they didn't own, and they wanted more.

My sense was this: when they talked about changing the school day, the school year and all this kind of stuff, there was outrage, just complete outrage. But the practicality of it—the people of Ontario really elected us because they felt there were some practical questions that needed to be asked.

I was quite surprised—and I know I'm joking around here, but I am bringing this all together with equity. My sister taught in the separate school system in the area, and she really enjoyed it, I might say that. She enjoys children. I think most teachers do, generally—if they could stay away from that union stuff, which Gerard seems to have completely digested. That's really where he's coming from: their agenda. I understand that. He should probably be the leader of the NDP party, really. What she found was that it was kind of an intolerant environment—because her name is O'Toole—so she's teaching in England. What she's finding there is they have a varied school year. They actually go to school for three or four months, and then they have two or three weeks off. They don't have this big, long two months off, and everybody's tuned out until about November, when school goes back. She says it's excellent. In fact, I challenge you to continue, as you say, using consultative processes with parents. There's a full-year school in Durham which I think is a pilot. It's an excellent secondary school where they do take choices and the children have alternates.

The equity is the issue I'm still going to. I want to be clearly on the record as saying that we have increased funding, it's my understanding, to about \$15.3 billion. You can respond in the time allotted to where the priorities are, but I heard you say it, and I want to put it on the record. It's about 60% wages and benefits, maybe higher than that. Maybe some of the finance people—it's higher than that, I think.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** It's higher than that.

**Mr O'Toole:** I think it's about 75% of every dollar we put in there so somebody can teach less.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Well, it covers all staff.

**Mr O'Toole:** No, no. I just want to make this clear. I have no problem. We've got to get this sorted out. Get rid

of the union, to start with, and here's what I suggest: What we should do is find a mechanism for paying good teachers tons of money; pay them beyond the grid. The grid is ridiculous. When you're trying to attract specialists in math and science, leadership and all kind of stuff, pay them for it. The technology people—what's this grid stuff about?

**1650**

Here's what I'm suggesting, though. I think they all work a good day. Do you understand? Even though it's 4.3 hours or whatever it is in terms of teaching time, classroom time, what we should say is that the school day is eight hours. You know, you're there from 8 to 4. Let's get over it. You're there, and that's it.

What they do in England is this: you actually teach about four hours and the other four hours is consultation and enrichment of students. Let's look at best practices around the world. Let's make sure that that 65% or 70% of the budget that's wages and benefits is spent in the classroom, rewarding teachers and providing supplies, and keep examining every possible opportunity for efficiencies in the system.

I'm surprised, too, that if you look at the education system, there's probably more opportunity to have a better use of the semestering of the school system as well. Summer school might be an extremely important time to increase enrichment for students. I think that's what you're trying to do with that student enrichment stuff, provide a sort of summer school or an enrichment activity in languages and math and really giving them the tools to learn, ultimately, and as early as possible.

I think the early reading and early math programs are just excellent. Everything I hear about them is first class and the whole idea of literacy—and some of that, by the way, is mentioned to some extent in the future documents. A lot of people should pay attention. The document is called *The Road Ahead*, an extremely important document. It talks about helping students achieve their own individual success. I think people will be attracted to this. I try to encourage them to stay tuned in on it.

I've pretty well covered everything I've got to say. There may even be a question in there or something.

I think Mr Marchese was talking about equity in education. I'm pleased to say we're getting there. Some areas like Ottawa, Toronto and other larger urban areas that have lots of industrial-commercial tax base are still a little bit ahead. I knew there were transitional things going on there and Toronto's resistant to provide that change.

If I look at the model for funding English as a second language, some of those ingredients of where they're different—inner-city school issues, children-at-risk issues, ESL issues, they are there—the funding isn't going to be identical for every student. I understand that, but the main thing is the equity and finding a determination for dealing with it.

If you could respond to my general observation on the equity, I'd be happy with that.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Sure, I'll endeavour to do that. We've been talking a lot about equity. I think I said in

my opening remarks today that the reason we went to the funding formula was because of the inequity as far as funding per student was involved for students throughout Ontario. We need to keep in mind that we're serving and providing funding now to four boards: the English public, the English Catholic, French public and French Catholic. Unfortunately, there was a great deal of disparity as far as funding because of assessment-raising ability within communities. The funding formula has certainly brought equity to the system. Students are now fairly funded. It's equitable and stable.

It's important to keep in mind that we have a system of education in Ontario that we should be very proud of. I don't know if we sing its praises loud and hard enough sometimes, but I can tell you that we continue to build, enhance and make sure we are doing everything to help our students achieve success in the province. We have many people travel here from other parts of the world, taking a look at the new curriculum, how our teachers are teaching and how well our students are doing. I think we need to compliment our teachers. We have many dedicated, hard-working teachers. Mr O'Toole, you would know that yourself from your work in the educational system. We have hard-working trustees. I think at the end of the day we continue to build on that strong foundation in the province of Ontario.

As I've said, we have the students, we have the parents, we have the trustees, we have the teachers, we have people working together, with the ultimate goal being, how can we help our students achieve success? How can we help our students achieve their maximum potential? Obviously, the most recent announcement of the \$50 million for students at risk that's going to go to the students in grades 7 to 12 who are experiencing some difficulty is going to help some of those students achieve success. It's going to enable them to go on to university or college or directly into the world of work. We're creating pathways whereby they can go directly into work, directly into employment or directly into apprenticeships.

I know there are more opportunities for our students today than ever before, and certainly the funding formula makes sure that all students have the same resources within their school. In fact, this past week, I went to a secondary school here in town and we announced the \$90 million that our government is providing for technological education. We are renewing, for the first time since about 1960, technical education in Ontario because we know that there's a real need for tradespeople in the province. There's a need for people to go into the area of technology. We're flowing \$90 million over four years. There's going to be the ability to buy new equipment to support teachers as they teach the new curriculum.

There is so much that is happening as a result of these new dollars flowing to schools throughout Ontario that's really helping our children. The results are indicating that our students are doing better than ever before. We need to keep focused on that. I mean, we can all be critical. I don't think it's beneficial, by the way, to be critical. I think it's much more helpful if we, the stakeholders, and

all the people interested in education continue to work together. We need to remember we're only in education for one reason, and that's the student.

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Arnott, you have five minutes.

**Mr Arnott:** It's a real honour to have the opportunity to raise a few issues in the context of this discussion of the Ministry of Education estimates and serve as the parliamentary assistant to the best Minister of Education in Canada. There's been reference made to a memorandum that was sent out to directors of education on December 13, 2002, just before Christmas last year. I've got a copy of this memorandum, because it was tabled with the committee after reference was made to it. There's a section on ISA funding that I think is very important, and I just want to put on the record what is here. This memo, again, was sent to directors of education of school boards by Norbert Hartmann, assistant deputy minister, elementary, secondary, business and finance division. In reference to ISA funding, Mr Norbert Hartmann wrote the following:

"In order to demonstrate appropriate accountability for this major new investment in special education and meet the government's intent that these resources result in significant improvements in programs and services for students with special needs, it is important that boards report comprehensively, consistently and accurately on how funding for special education has been used.

"The ministry will be establishing a working group made up of representatives of the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education, senior school board staff responsible for financial reporting and special education programs to develop recommendations for improved reporting for the purposes of compliance with the special education expenditure envelope. We will be providing further details concerning this expenditure reporting review as soon as possible.

"Because files have been added to the ISA baseline since 2000, it is likely that some of these files represent students who have already left the Ontario school system. To help ensure that each board's special education funding for 2003-04 reflects the files of students who are still in the system, the ministry with the ISA working group is also developing recommendations for an audit of ISA-eligible files. The working group is seeking an approach that will minimize the administrative effort of board staff. We will be providing further details concerning this audit as soon as possible."

**1700**

I read that because the Liberal education critic, when he was talking about this particular document, indicated that there was a commitment to flow the ISA funding—I think the word he used was "immediately." The word "immediately" does not appear in this section of the memo. The word "immediate" does not appear. Certainly it's the position of the government that the funding would flow as soon as possible, and that seems to be implied, but unfortunately that statement by the Liberal education critic was inaccurate.

I'm somewhat disappointed that when we asked for a copy of the resolution that he had made reference to



earlier, that he said the minister made while she was chair of the school board in Waterloo region, that there was, again, using his words, “a resolution against funding private schools,” he has not brought that resolution to this committee. I think he has a staff person here. Perhaps he would want to send his staff person back to his office to see if he can comb the files and find it. If he can’t find it, again, I would suggest to him it might be most appropriate for him to apologize to the House, because I think all of us around here know that credibility is hard earned and easily lost, and every time a member makes a patently inaccurate statement, their credibility is diminished yet again.

**The Vice-Chair:** Are you asking for—

**Mr O’Toole:** Yes, he’s asking him to resign.

**The Vice-Chair:** Are you through?

**Mr Arnott:** That’s what I wanted to say.

**Mr Marchese:** Pick it up, John.

**Mr O’Toole:** The minister might want to respond, out of respect.

**The Vice-Chair:** You have a minute or less.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We’ll lose our minute and move on.

**Mr O’Toole:** Yes, take it off the 21.

**The Vice-Chair:** Everyone is so generous to you today, Mr Marchese. They’re giving their time if they have it.

**Mr Kennedy:** Madam Minister, I want to come back to some of the things we left off with. It isn’t acceptable, in this proceeding, that you not answer the questions around the basics of Dr Rozanski’s report. You held off for many months from doing anything on behalf of children in this province. We just heard some talk about special education. You held off fulfilling the request for special education, the improved grants, until it was politically convenient for you to do so. When Dr Rozanski tabled his report in December, he had to remind you to add two principles to the funding formula: one was adequacy; the other was stability. You have boards out there treading water, barely, now that you’ve responded to some of the keep-up funds. For some reason, you think they should be grateful and the students should be grateful simply for not being thrown an anchor again this year, but rather actually being able to keep afloat. That doesn’t address the fundamentals of the Rozanski report.

Minister, again, I want to ask you very, very clearly where your position is on the foundation grant. You don’t have the money committed for this year or next year or the year after that to implement these recommendations. Before you answer, I want to put to you what is the more likely scenario. The more likely scenario was in a memo that was leaked in October 2002. The finance minister’s staff said, “At the meeting with the Premier’s office staff yesterday, Lisa indicated that the Premier was musing about maintaining the annual increase in ... funding of \$500 million for the next three years.” It said—and this is back in October, before Dr Rozanski even delivered his report to you, Minister—it would be “\$500 million for the next three years, starting in 2003-04, bringing the

total increased funding in the fourth year to \$2 billion.” Where have we heard that before? Right here in this committee from you, Minister—a political decision being made in October 2002.

It says to Finance Minister Ecker, “You may wish to raise with Minister Witmer her approach to responding to Rozanski this fall beyond any base increase amount. I raise this with you because I believe that this amount has been shared with Minister Witmer by the Premier, and I think you need to start confirming that this would be at least a soft cap of an increase, and how we can work with her to manage this.”

Minister, that’s what you’re doing with us today: you’re trying to manage the fact that you’ve failed Rozanski; you’ve failed to deliver the dollars that Dr Rozanski asked for. You have in front of you the recommendations that Dr Rozanski made on behalf of students, and you have, for example, received a letter that you haven’t responded to since last September from Gwen Singh. She’s a parent at Cathcart school in Sarnia. She wrote a letter to you talking about 34 students in her child’s grade 3 class and you didn’t respond to the letter. What Dr Rozanski did: he released his recommendations, and on the foundation grant, the first recommendation and the largest one he asked for—presumably he was serious about it. You have yet to respond, and even in this committee you will not address why you either don’t agree with Dr Rozanski’s requirement that there be \$477 million put in for more teachers—for more music teachers, for more phys ed, for the exact teaching positions that have been eliminated in the last number of years, that they should be there—or explain to us how you have failed in cabinet and that this is Mr Eves’s response instead.

Minister, there needs to be an answer on your part. There are families and students out there that depended on Dr Rozanski. He did his part. He made the recommendation. Now will you as minister do your part and tell us whether you agree with his recommendation or not, and whether you have an explanation for why you haven’t been able to deliver on his recommendation?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Unfortunately, thus far the critic has failed to deliver on the resolution that he said was indeed fact last week. That’s really quite—

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, your sad attempt to use up my time with your questions isn’t going to work. Mr Chair, I would ask you again: please ask the minister to answer the questions that are put to her. She has plenty of time to answer the soapbox questions from the other side.

**The Vice-Chair:** The minister is attempting to answer. It may not be the answer that you want.

**Mr Kennedy:** With all respect, Mr Chair, I defer to you but I know that those non-answers get boring after a while. The minister does have an obligation, I feel, to answer the questions in this committee.

**The Vice-Chair:** She is attempting to answer. It may not be the one that you want in the way that you want it, but she is answering.

**Mr Kennedy:** With all respect, Mr Chair, it has nothing to do with a single thing I’ve asked her about.

The \$477 million for the foundation grant: she is clearly afraid to answer why she couldn't get more than \$66 million against this recommendation. It tells every parent in the province that the minister and the government are not committed to the foundation. The foundation grant was out of whack when Dr Rozanski looked at it, to the tune of \$477 million, and the minister has nothing to say on that particular question.

**The Vice-Chair:** If you're asking the Chair to ask the minister to answer, I will have to give her time to answer.

**Mr Kennedy:** Sure. But could you keep her to that question, Mr Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** But again, if she refuses to answer in the way you want, there's nothing I can do about it. Minister.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As I say, I'm still looking for that resolution from last week. That was Wednesday or Tuesday of last week; we're now one week later. Surely, if someone's going to quote from some resolution that I passed, I'd love to—

**Mr Kennedy:** I'm still waiting for your answers from last year, Minister, if you want to use that standard. Your ministry is hiding all kinds of stuff. So let's move on, shall we?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** No.

**Mr Kennedy:** Could we have an answer?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** If you're going to speak to a resolution that I supposedly passed, I do believe I need to have the opportunity to get it.

**Mr Kennedy:** You did pass it. Your board did pass it, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** You said I passed it. I'd like to see it.

**Mr Kennedy:** Your Waterloo board passed that resolution, Minister.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** If you have it in your possession, I'd like to see it.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I would rather you do your job today as Minister of Education. I'm quite interested to have you answer questions, if you're up to it. Now, would you answer a question on the foundation grant? Would you do that? There are parents here watching, there are parents here from schools, and they're flabbergasted, Minister, that you play this stonewalling game rather than answer questions. Use this time gainfully. You can have a difference of opinion, but to not even address the individual recommendations that Dr Rozanski put forward shows them that this is just a game you're playing. It's just show business.

Minister, it's a serious impact on students. Gwen Singh has too many kids in her child's class. Their board does not benefit from Dr Rozanski's recommendation because you are not providing the dollars. Is there a reason, Minister, any reason at all?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Chair, I don't think anybody's playing politics. Maybe the member opposite is. I will just say one more time, if you have the resolution, would you please produce it. But at the present time, your credibility is in question.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, I'm going to ask you again. I owe it to people who are struggling out there to ask you these questions even if you're going to continue to do this ridiculous avoidance. I implore you not to, but I want to ask you again around things like English as a second language. I'll refer you to the table. The investigator, Dr Rozanski, said that students were falling behind. Your own guidelines, in fact, on English as a second language speak to Dr Rozanski's recommendation. They said to change the support for children from three years to five years; make English as a second language a more successful program for students. They ask you to do that in no uncertain terms. And instead of Dr Rozanski's request for \$90 million, you've given nothing, zero, not a single penny to his urgent request. He says that's what kids across the province need in order to learn.

1710

Yesterday we had some parents who were here from the Mandarin language association—from a number of groups, in fact—and they wanted to hear your answer. I've undertaken to send them the Hansard of your answer today. They want to know why the needs of their children, clearly identified by Dr Rozanski, don't carry any weight with you. Why is it that either you aren't in agreement with the English-as-a-second-language recommendation or you couldn't get the money to fund that particular recommendation?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Mr Speaker—Mr Chair.

**The Vice-Chair:** It's OK.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Well, we're going to need one in September.

I would just indicate one more time that our government has endorsed the recommendations. We're going to be implementing the recommendations over the course of three years, as I said in my conversation with Mr Marchese, whom I would just compliment on the way he conducts himself in here.

It's important to remember that the budget announced a funding floor for education that our partners in education can count on. It did not announce a funding ceiling. Over the course of the next three years we're going to be continuing to implement the recommendations.

Our government has demonstrated a sincere commitment to helping students in the classroom achieve success, and we're going to continue to move forward and do everything in our power to help those young people.

**Mr Kennedy:** Well, Minister, it's not sincere without you being serious about these individual concerns. I'm sorry; you can't claim that. You may be sincere in your wishes, but to be sincere to these parents, to Gwen Singh and the other parents who stepped forward—you're saying zero to them. That isn't at all acceptable.

In fact, you chose earlier to selectively quote from People for Education. They said very clearly that this approach of rejecting some of Dr Rozanski's recommendations outright—this is their release of April 28—is contrary to the advice of Dr Rozanski, who stated that each of the recommendations is concomitant with the other. Instead, you're having a process to cherry-pick

from the report you commissioned. That seems very evident.

I think that as Minister of Education you owe the parents of English-as-a-second-language children who are being denied services across this province. Yesterday we had the chair of Peel, Janet McDougald, here, because she is wise to your game, as are boards all over the province. They are missing 124 English-as-a-second-language teachers because you haven't addressed this recommendation and the recommendation for the foundation grant. That's a lot of children being denied English as a second language. Again, Minister, do you have something to say very specifically about why you are denying funding to children who need this extra support to learn English?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** If we take a look at the Peel District School Board, since 1998 they have received a 117% increase in their allocation for ESL. It's gone from \$11.8 million in 1998-99 to a projected \$25.6 million for the next school year.

I would also indicate to you that Peel has considerable flexibility in how it uses its funding for in-room class staffing and program delivery. Flexibility in resource allocation, particularly in classroom staffing and program delivery, remains with the board, because it is in the best position to identify local needs when setting budgetary priorities.

I would also hasten to add that if we take a look at ESL funding, it is projected to rise to over \$190 million in 2003-04. That is an increase of almost \$79 million, or 71%, compared to ESL funding levels in 1998-99.

**Mr Kennedy:** This is the ridiculous kind of credit the government tries to claim for itself. It did a terrible job of funding in 1998-99. It hired an independent investigator, Dr Rozanski, and he said that as of this year—not 1998-99—you need \$90 million more. He said that clearly, Minister, and you won't give the respect to those kids out there to answer why you're giving them nothing, zero. You dare go back to 1998-99, when you did such an abysmal job of it, and now you're doing a slightly worse job. These kids aren't getting their education. I can't think of a worse indictment of an education system that won't let kids learn English adequately.

Here's what Janet McDougald had to say very recently, on May 26, about your overall funding: "What this (balanced budget) approval disguises is that the funding formula continues to be a mockery of meeting student needs. And the greatest irony is that everyone knows that the formula is not working for kids. Each day our staff and parents see first-hand the effect of the reductions."

She says, for example, that last year there was "a \$26-million gap between the amount" they "are funded, and the amount" they pay in salaries. "A year later—after the Rozanski promises and the many announcements—our gap is now—are you ready for it—\$27 million!"

So the money—\$27 million, \$1 million worse than last year—has to come from other parts of their budget.

Again, you can't hide in 1998-99 numbers. You have hired somebody, he has done his job, and sitting in front

of you is his recommendation for \$90 million. Will you tell the children in this province and their families when they can expect to see the \$90 million that Dr Rozanski said is essential? He said it was needed in August last year, and you're giving zero. When can they expect to see some of the money you're trying to lay claim to by identifying their needs? Where are the dollars? Where is the support? Where are the teachers?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Although there are those who try to make misleading statements in here, I would just remind the member one more time that Dr Rozanski's recommendations covered a period of three years. He asked that the recommendations be implemented over the course of three years; we are doing exactly that.

This is what Chairperson Joyce Bennett says: "We're pleased this year because the government has listened to Dr Rozanski's report and there has been ... recognition of, for one, special education." That's from May 26.

Ray Vincent, chair of the Sudbury Catholic board: "I think the government has been responsive. We're satisfied that the main areas Rozanski targeted have been addressed by this government. We've had enhanced funding in the past two or three months that benefited our budget for this school year."

Phyllis Benedict says, "The government has taken the Rozanski report on education funding seriously. Teachers welcome the Ontario government's commitment to multi-year funding for school boards."

So there may be differences of opinion, but I can tell you the amount of money that has been flowing—Dr Rozanski is in total agreement with the flowing of the money. We are following through on his recommendations, but he recommended three years—

**Mr Kennedy:** Like everyone starved in the desert, they're happy for a glass of water, but they're not happy that the facts don't bear out the assurances you're giving. You cannot say in this committee that Dr Rozanski's recommendations are being lived up to by you or by anyone.

There are many, many boards, and some of them are quite courageously on the record—for example, up in Bluewater—saying they don't believe you. They're cutting back their budget now by \$2.5 million because they don't believe you're going to deliver the rural funding. They don't think that's going to happen. They've heard these promises before, and they've heard how they haven't materialized.

You also ignored another recommendation of Dr Rozanski. He said—and it's very important for urban areas—that the learning opportunities grant should be increased immediately by \$50 million. He identified that one of the strongest things known in education research is the connection between children who are not thriving and low-income backgrounds. He asked for a \$50-million increase. You took that \$50 million and used it for something else instead. Does that mean that nothing can be expected by way of a demographic increase for the children living in poverty whom Dr Rozanski said should get your attention and obviously can't get your attention

today or any time? Will there be something for that demographic change in the learning opportunities grant?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We would be pleased to have one of our administrators share with you some of the work that's taking place in that area.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, do you disagree that there has been any response?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Do you know what? Our ministry staff has been working extremely hard to ensure that the appropriate allocations are made to help students in the classroom. I think it's really unfortunate that we don't give credit to the individuals who really do care about the kids and who are working really hard.

1720

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, maybe they've done their job. The question is whether you've done yours. You have not convinced your cabinet colleagues to give you enough commitment to public education. You've stayed silent in committee, silent in the House about private school tax credits, which you obviously now agree with—you're all in favour of \$500 million going that way—but you're not fighting for these kids. You refuse today to stand up in committee for the kids who need help in terms of demographic assistance. Those are the kids who need the boost in the early years, which we have proven. Right now, as we speak, your appointed supervisor in Toronto is rolling up full-day kindergarten in Regent Park, taking it away, and you obviously approve of that. You don't wish to address those kinds of things.

Minister, I want to ask you, on another level that a lot of people can identify with—the investigator, Dr Rozanski, talked about \$5.6 billion of crumbling schools that are falling down on your watch all around the province. He said, "Get with it. Start paying to fix these schools." He asked for \$200 million a year, and you, so far, have guaranteed zero, nothing, against his deferred maintenance recommendation.

Do you have any reason you can give to the parents and children who feel that their schools are becoming unsafe, that there will be some response coming forward from you any time soon?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Our staff would be pleased to respond to you, Mr Kennedy.

**Mr Kennedy:** Minister, with respect, I've had briefings from your staff and they defer questions to you. This is your turn to answer questions. Instead, you choose to avoid the responsibility that is minimal for any Minister of Education. There is here a track record on Dr Rozanski's recommendations. You've only committed to 31% over the next three years. You have a track record here of taking anywhere from 12 to 15 years to implement Dr Rozanski, and that's not good enough, absolutely not good enough.

**The Vice-Chair:** You have run out of time.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, I'm just going to continue with this—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I don't have the book, but I think somebody—

**Mr Marchese:** You will. There it is.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** OK.

**Mr Marchese:** You see, we were good. We just want to help. We're here to help. We only have nine members; we're here to help.

**Mr Arnott:** You have funding, though.

**Mr Marchese:** That's good, thank God.

The Ontario Alternative Budget—Telling Tales Out of School: How the Ontario Government Isn't Funding Education—and I do hope you are supporting me, by the way. On page 5, for the benefit of others who don't have this, he says, "Funding Warning #1—The March Economic Statement

"In its March 2003 economic statement, the government highlighted proudly"—no, just before I get there; you see, I forget, there's so much. You said, and I wanted to get back to this point, that Rozanski validated that the funding formula was working. That's what you said, more or less, right?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes.

**Mr Marchese:** Could you explain how he did that? How did he validate that your funding formula was working?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** He actually did make a comment to the effect that certainly it was achieving the equity in education and the stability and the fairness that hadn't existed in the province before.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, I see. OK.

The funding recommendations he makes: are they in keeping with the direction you were going or not? Are the recommendations he makes in keeping with the road you had planned all along—that was OK, and you were on the right track—or was he perhaps indicating something was wrong with the funding formula?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** As you know, the funding formula was introduced in 1998 to ensure that equal funding was going to flow to allow each child to achieve their full potential. I think it's extremely important that you continually review the funding formula.

**Mr Marchese:** Right. I understand that. I was just concerned that in your statement that he validated that the funding formula was working, there are a number of aspects to how the funding formula works or doesn't work.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's right, but he believes—there was nobody, except for maybe one or two, who wanted to go back to local taxation.

**Mr Marchese:** Yes, but all I wanted you to speak to is the fact that his recommending a \$2.1-billion increase would suggest there was a problem with the funding formula.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Right. He was recommending that additional money should be invested over the next three years—

**Mr Marchese:** Not money you took out of the system, certainly.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** —and we agree with that.

**Mr Marchese:** It isn't money you took out of the system, obviously, because you've poured so much money in.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** He has recommended these specific areas where he saw need for additional money. So we've been responsive because we believe he got the advice of the stakeholders.

**Mr Marchese:** Let's get to that, then. "In its March 2003 economic statement, the government highlighted proudly a three-year commitment to funding increases for elementary and secondary education.

"The budget touted a funding commitment of \$15.3 billion for school year 2003-04 and funding targets of \$15.8 billion for 2004-05 and \$16.2 billion for 2005-06, compared with \$14.3 billion at the time of last year's budget.

"It hailed the announcement as a 14% increase by 2005-06, compared with the \$14.3 billion for 2002-03 announced in May 2002.

"Compared with the actual amount spent in 2002-03, however, the change looks much less dramatic," he argues.

"The government's own data make the point." He's using your data, not his own or invented or fabricated.

"With the single exception of 2002-03, when the December response to Rozanski pushed the funding increases from 2.9% to 6.5%, funding increases post-Rozanski are not dramatically different from the increases prevalent pre-Rozanski—a pattern that produced the funding crisis to which Rozanski's appointment was a response."

For the benefit of some people who are not following this chart, the education funding multi-year base funding profile, in 2000-01 it was 2.3%; in 2001-02, it's 3%; in 2002-03 the plan is 2.9%, and that's where you have an increase, your jump. The increase is presumably in special ed and transportation.

There you see in 2002-03 a 6.5% increase, which is good. It reflects some of your additional dollars. The problem with your multi-year funding is that when you get back to the following year, we're back at 3.4% and the following year after that we're back at 3.3%. You see, this guy, Hugh Mackenzie, economist, is saying we've got a problem here.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Yes, but I think he does not understand and perhaps others don't understand—

**Mr Marchese:** That's probably true.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** —that when we talk about multi-year funding and giving some certainty to our funding partners, we are talking about a floor, an amount of money our partners can depend upon. We're not talking about a ceiling. As I said before, we're setting up a review.

**Mr Marchese:** I see. So what you're saying is, this 3.4% that is announced as part of your multi-year—

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** That's a floor; that's not a ceiling.

**Mr Marchese:** So there will be more money that will flow, is what you're saying, except we won't know because you may not get elected. We don't really know what may or may not happen. This is just the base, not the ceiling.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Exactly.

**Mr Marchese:** I see.

**Mr Kennedy:** It's not in The Road Ahead.

**Mr Marchese:** People are led to believe that there will be more money other than what you say will be in the plan, because that's what you said in your March plan. Your March statement said that's what you're getting is 3.4%. That's what it says. It doesn't say "maybe." It doesn't say, "Oh, by the way, it's the base." I don't see that in your document. Maybe you could read it to me where you say this is the base, not the ceiling. Do you have that in your March statement that was read out in the Legislature?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I don't have it right here, Mr Marchese.

**Mr Marchese:** Does the deputy?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** But I would just simply say to you that when you take a look at multi-year funding, obviously you are trying to give some certainty to the stakeholders and so you give them a base.

**Mr Marchese:** I appreciate that.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** But we're not talking about a ceiling. More funding could be available, would be available. At this point in time, we don't know what that ceiling would be, but we do know what the base will be.

**Mr Marchese:** Right. Except you say that you accept the recommendations, and if you do, he argues on page 6, "These figures indicate that, to reach the Rozanski funding target"—it's the second paragraph to the left there on page 6. Do you see that?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** What page are you on?

**Mr Marchese:** Work with us—page 6, second paragraph, left, yes.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** All right.

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**Mr Marchese:** "These figures indicate that, to reach the Rozanski funding target, the government would have to provide three consecutive years of 6.2% increases on top of the 6.5% increase in final funding for 2002-03...."

The point that he makes, that I'm suggesting to you, is that if you support Rozanski, then what you should have put in your statement in 2003-04 is a 6.2% increase, he's arguing. The corollary of supporting Rozanski is that for the following year, your increases ought to be 6.2%.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm just going to take you back to the budget. "We are accepting his advice," it says in the budget. This is Dr Mordechai Rozanski's advice. "By 2005-06, multi-year base funding for school boards will be 14% or almost \$2 billion higher than the funding provided in last year's budget." That's why I say we're talking about base, but I also said to you in an earlier response that we are going to be consulting with the sector in order to develop the mechanisms for annually reviewing and updating the benchmarks in the funding formula. That's part of what's still going to be happening. All of this will have an impact on the eventual ceiling, which we don't know now.

**Mr Marchese:** No problem. I understand that, but here's the problem, if I can rephrase it or restate it. You just read to me that in 2005, the base funding will be

14%. If that were so, Hugh Mackenzie's arguing that the increases that you project in your chart—the figure he uses that you provide—cannot be 3.3%. It would have to be 6.2%, is what he's saying. So your 14% increase ought to reflect a different number. It cannot be 3.3%; it must be 6.2% to get to where you said in your economic statement we need to be at.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would again remind you that he recommended it happen over three years.

I would read what Dr Rozanski said in the Toronto Star. This was in March. He said that “within four months the government has taken seriously the recommendations and moved to implement more than \$1.8 billion in funding over three years.”

It goes on to mention that despite the fact that enrolment's going to be decreasing, he mentions that we've put money into teachers, special ed, transportation, textbooks, and students at risk. He praised the government's plan to regularly review its spending.

**Mr Marchese:** I understand what he said. I hear what you're saying. I'm saying they're not consistent; they don't add up. I'm saying that if we are to be consistent to Rozanski's recommendation, the multi-year funding should reflect itself, in 2002-03, 6.5%. The next two years ought to have 6.2% increases there. That's what it ought to have to respect Rozanski. Whether you consult people or not is irrelevant because he's already consulted people. Rozanski is saying—and Hugh Mackenzie in his analysis of this—that to respect that, your increases ought to be 6.2%. That has nothing to do with whatever consultations you may or may not want to do, but that base funding should be 6.2%. That's what I'm saying that Hugh Mackenzie is arguing that you're not reflecting in your figures.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would just remind you that what we've announced thus far refers to a base, a floor, and it doesn't refer to a ceiling. We still have to develop the mechanisms for the annual review and the updating of the benchmarks.

**Mr Marchese:** Now I can see we're not getting anywhere. That's where we hit a wall, you see. It's hard; I understand. We're just saying that it's true that the Liberals are not implementing the full Rozanski; they said that.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** No, we didn't.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** OK. Better not touch them, then. This is an election issue. As far as I know, the Liberals are not implementing Rozanski, and my point is—

**Mr Kennedy:** We're implementing more than Rozanski.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, you're going to do more than Rozanski?

**Mr Kennedy:** That's right.

**Mr Marchese:** God bless you. They're good. They're really good. They're going to do more than Rozanski. Rozanski is already expensive. He's already expensive to the point that this government cannot do it—because

they're talking about the base and no ceiling. They will not only implement Rozanski, but on top of that will find—how much?—Two billion or more? Or \$1.6 billion, \$1.5 billion, more or less? They're going to find \$2 billion more—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** They're going to look at the figures. It can't be done, Gerard.

**Mr Kennedy:** It can be done.

**Mr Marchese:** It can't be done.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** No, you see, I'm telling you. Unless you tax a couple of good people who have got the deep pockets—

**Mr O'Toole:** Go after the rich.

**Mr Marchese:** No.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** You should go back to the promises of 1985-90.

**Mr Marchese:** Oh, well, that's a different story. That's so far. I don't want to go back that long. Minister, my problem is that you're not implementing Rozanski. I'm a bit disappointed, of course. That's not just me; it's teachers, parents, students, everybody that follows these issues.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would just take exception to that. We are, with due respect to the member—and I appreciate his commitment to this document here, but we have endorsed the recommendations. We will be implementing them over three years—

**Mr Marchese:** But you're not.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:**—and thus far we have announced the funding floor for education, one that our partners can count on but we have not, obviously, because there's still more consultation taking place.

**Mr Marchese:** Minister, please, you're repeating the same thing.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** A ceiling.

**Mr Marchese:** No, no, it's not helpful.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** It's pretty simple.

**Mr Marchese:** Let me ask you about that ceiling: what do you think that ceiling should look like?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** At this point in time, until we finish those consultations, I don't have any more information for you.

**Mr Marchese:** Do you have any feelings about this? Do you have any feelings about what you think that ceiling ought to look like, could look like, what you would like it to look like?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I would simply say we're endorsing the Rozanski recommendations.

**Mr Marchese:** So you're disputing my argument and the argument Hugh Mackenzie puts forth that you're not, is that it?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I'm saying that we've made a commitment to endorse the recommendations and, over the course of the next three years, to implement those recommendations.

**Mr Marchese:** So when I say that Hugh Mackenzie says that in order to do that, to respect Rozanski's

recommendations, your ceiling would have to be 6.2% or 6.3% next year and the following year; when he says that you're not meeting that commitment, you're saying that isn't true.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** Maybe it will be 10% one of the years.

**Mr Marchese:** But it's not written in your March statement.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** We've given the base and I think that's something people need to understand clearly. As you know, this was the first year that multi-year funding was announced.

**Mr Marchese:** Let me go on because on page 9, he makes some other points. It's a good report. I try to read this good stuff.

**Mr O'Toole:** Wrong stuff. Read *The Road Ahead*.

**Mr Marchese:** I will. There are some sections in there that I need to attack more carefully.

"Overall," he says, "funding for operations and capital for school boards falls short of what would be required to implement Rozanski by \$1.394 million, with immediate implementation, or \$666 million for the first year of a three-year phase-in of the recommended benchmark catch-up recommendations."

Then he goes on to say that the major funding shortfalls are foundation grant: \$511 million, and it would be \$182 million the first-year phase-in; special education: \$102 million, and that would be \$42 million the first-year phase-in; language programs, which I'm assuming includes ESL: \$91 million, and that's \$74 million for the first-year phase-in; transportation: \$96 million, \$30 million for a first-year phase-in; administration and governance: \$46 million, \$17 million the first-year phase-in; school operations: \$201 million, \$75 million the first-year phase-in; and school renewal: \$263 million, \$242 million first-year phase-in. Your comments on that.

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**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think it's important to appreciate the fact that we have announced, as of March 18 of this year, an enhancement for school renewal funding, bringing the grant for school renewal this year to \$287 million. Of that, \$25 million is going to supplement the school renewal allocation, \$25 million to fund the replacement of schools that are prohibitive to repair and \$25 million to increase the benchmarks for school renewal effective 2004-05. So certainly it is our plan to continue to move forward. Unfortunately, some of the stock of schools is going to require a substantial investment, and we are going to move forward, planning for new schools and renewing existing facilities.

**Mr Marchese:** The economist concludes by saying the following: "These shortfalls arise from two primary sources in relation to Rozanski's recommendations: the failure of the government"—that's you—"to implement any part of Rozanski's \$1.08 billion recommendations for benchmark adjustments to reflect prior year cost changes; and the failure of the government to act at all on two key areas of new investment: \$65 million in funding for language instruction and \$200 million annually for five years to address the school maintenance backlog."

I have a great deal of faith in his numbers. He is a very careful economist. I think the government ought to review this report and, now that you have a copy, when we come back Tuesday we might have a better chat about it.

**The Vice-Chair:** It's time for the government.

**Mr Mazzilli:** What I would propose to do is ask for unanimous consent. The minister has been well spoken today and certainly has addressed all our needs on this side of the committee. I would ask for unanimous consent that we waive the balance of our time and adjourn the committee today, if that would be OK with committee members.

**Mr Kennedy:** I just want to be clear: this is not time that will help the minister or the overall commitment—

**Mr Mazzilli:** That's correct.

**Mr Kennedy:** —it's just that the Conservative members choose not to ask the minister any questions.

**Mr Mazzilli:** That's correct. The minister—

**Mr Kennedy:** That's separate from the time you're proposing to give up on Tuesday, to enable this to end by the end of the day. This isn't part of that equation. If you don't ask the questions now, no one else does.

**Mr Mazzilli:** That is not part of the equation.

**Mr Kennedy:** OK, I just want to be sure, because—

**Mr Mazzilli:** We're waiving the balance of our time for today, the next 20 minutes.

**Mr Kennedy:** You just don't want to ask questions today.

**Mr Mazzilli:** The minister certainly addressed all of our concerns.

**The Vice-Chair:** Let me see if I understand this clearly now. You are waiving your time here. One of the challenges here is that the minister has indicated she won't be able to come on Wednesday. This will again put a little challenge to that time.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Well, the parliamentary assistant can fill in on Wednesday.

**The Vice-Chair:** Let me just finish. If you waive your time now, it extends—

*Interjections.*

**The Vice-Chair:** May I just finish, please? If you're waiving your time, it extends the time down to Wednesday, which again challenges the time of the minister, who won't be here anyhow on Wednesday. So if you waive your time, that's fine, but the next matter goes to them.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Mr Chair, I withdraw my motion.

**The Vice-Chair:** OK. Then you will proceed.

**Mr O'Toole:** It demonstrates to me once again that there's a great willingness from this side to—

**Mr Kennedy:** We hate to make you guys work.

**Mr O'Toole:** No, no, certainly not. I believe in constructive dialogue. It's extremely important.

Mr Marchese has been exemplary in his ability to make his points and put his duty as a critic for education for the NDP. He should be commended.

**Interjection:** Is this part of their time?

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes, it is. I think the people of Ontario should be watching Mr Marchese's style. He really does

have a genuine interest in students, as opposed to the political points the Liberals are making. I think when he speaks sincerely, I may not agree with everything, but at least I'm listening to you, and that's important. As elected public people, you've got to be engaged, listening, as the minister and the staff have been today. Yet we find Mr Kennedy, to be specific, almost confrontational with the Deputy Minister of Education.

In my view—and I want to go back to the basics here—I've tried to build on a conversation with the minister where I get the most time. The four basic principles that I think we've achieved—you have, under your leadership; I want to stress that—are, first, we are basically challenging students with the new curriculum that builds on the basics of reading, writing, math and science. That's something I'll comment on in a moment. The second is giving parents the information they need to help their children learn. We all know—we've heard the saying that it takes a community and all that stuff to raise a child—but there are three important components. It's not a single entity here. It's not just the teacher, it's not just the parent and it's not just the student. All members of that triangular relationship must be engaged fully. Supporting excellence in teaching—and that's where I believe the union has been negative—is something I know our minister celebrates and I would like to celebrate. Most of the members on this side would like to find a way to do that, even if it means stopping some of the rhetoric with the teaching community. And providing students and teachers with a safe, stable environment that encourages and supports learning. I think those four basic principles are something we should be held to, and I believe the minister is.

I'm just going to give you my little report card. This is June. In another week or so, the students will be out. In fact, some of them are out now. I hope the report cards are done; I know my wife has got most of her report cards done. She works hard, as most teachers do.

Here's how I see it. Equity is up, so you get an A in equity. Test results: clearly they are up. Everything I've read recently indicates that they are up. New schools in my area and across the province: that's up. My kids' education was totally in portables. They had no gyms in most of the high schools. So you get an A there. Funding is up. So you get straight As, and as far as I'm concerned, keep up the good work. There's always more to be done. We want to be the best in the world, not just the best in Ontario or Toronto. We want to be the best in the world. There's always more to do, and the challenges are ahead. I think a good beginning is with Mordechai Rozanski and following up on that three-year commitment.

Now, there are challenges. Certainly the special education challenge is ahead of us. I see more and more very sophisticated treatment modalities in terms of behaviour. Those things are not completely clinically proven or sound yet, from everything I've read. And the integration question is still there. I think certainly most—all, I believe—want as much as possible the integration of children with educational needs; there's no question that

that's doable. There's always going to be more ahead to challenge us.

But—and I think Mr Marchese was making some point here—what it really comes down to is this: I too want to have the strong economy in our province to be able to sustain the quality of life, which includes, most importantly probably of all the ministries, education and health. You ran into it, Rosario, when you were in government. Your solution was the social contract, and I felt very sorry—I was the chair of finance in municipal government at the time and I knew the trouble you were in; everybody knew it. You tried to get an agreement with all the unions, but they wouldn't take one cent or one holiday, so you had to force it on them. They're still mad, actually; that's why you won't be government for probably another 10 years.

**Mr Arnott:** A generation.

**Mr O'Toole:** It will take them a generation to forget and forgive.

I think we have moved forward and I think you're getting it, but you have to have the economy to be able to support all of the promises in education. And I have yet to hear an honest answer from a Liberal in my life, let alone during the current discussions.

**Mr Gerretsen:** You get to hear an honest—

**Mr O'Toole:** No, I think they're against most of the things that have made this province successful.

**The Vice-Chair:** Let's get the meeting in focus now. Speak to the Chair.

**Mr O'Toole:** No, I'm focusing. This all comes together because public education in this province has just recently been given straight As. Now, I was the one giving the marks, but it was given straight As in four categories of the basic building principles of public education. I'm going to give the minister a couple of moments here—I'm just giving her a warning—to respond to this and, if she doesn't, I'll share the rest of my time with her parliamentary assistant, Ted. His wife's a teacher as well. He's got three children. Are they all in school?

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**Mr Arnott:** Two are in the public school system.

**Mr O'Toole:** Two are in public. Is the other in private?

**Mr Arnott:** No, no. He's four years old.

**Mr O'Toole:** He's four, being home-trained.

**Mr Arnott:** He's anxious to go to school.

**Mr O'Toole:** I thank the minister. Hopefully we can wrap this up amicably by next Tuesday. Mr Mazzilli from London tried to—

**Mr Gerretsen:** He tried to wind it up about 10 minutes ago.

**Mr O'Toole:** Yes, he did, and Mr Kennedy wouldn't agree. John, you seem to be agreeing with us now. Gerard is totally isolated.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Chair, can I try that again? I move that we waive the balance of our time and adjourn for the day, with the consent of other committee members.



**The Vice-Chair:** Let me repeat: if you ask for this time—and you can do that—we still have to complete the other time.

Do I have unanimous consent to—

**Mr Mazzilli:** I withdraw, then.

**The Vice-Chair:** You're withdrawing this.

**Mr Arnott:** There's still the outstanding issue of the resolution—I think I have to characterize it now as the fictitious resolution, because we have asked for it now, I think, three or four times—

**Mr Mazzilli:** It's a lie.

**Mr Arnott:** The Liberal education critic has indicated that a resolution was passed by one of the regional school boards some time ago and—

**Mr Gerretsen:** On a point of order, Mr Chair: I believe the member opposite in government said that something was “a lie.” I think he has to withdraw that remark.

**Mr Mazzilli:** I said that if something is not the truth then it's a lie.

**Mr O'Toole:** It was a lie.

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. There was an inappropriate comment made by Mr O'Toole. If you want to withdraw that—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Arnott:** I'm not prepared to characterize it as a lie, but at the same time I'd like to see the resolution that he made reference to. We're getting a little closer, though. He has narrowed the focus. He hasn't given us the date as to when the supposed or fictitious resolution was brought forward, but he did say he believed that it was between 1985 and 1990. At least we got that information from the Liberal opposition critic today on this. Maybe by next week he will have the opportunity—

*Interjections.*

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. May I get some order? It's getting raggedy now. The fact is that you've asked for this resolution. The member has not made any commitment to do so. So you want to proceed and finish in your time.

**Mr Arnott:** But it is my time. I appreciate your intervention to assist me in my comment. I'm not sure it was helpful. I would still like to receive a copy of this resolution so as to know for sure what was debated and what was discussed, if such a resolution exists. If it doesn't exist, again, I would ask that the Liberal opposition critic go to the House—maybe the appropriate time would be today—to apologize for the fact that he made an inaccurate statement. I think that's what he owes the House.

**The Vice-Chair:** I'm just regarding all what he said as comments. It's not a question or a motion. Are these your comments?

**Mr Arnott:** Well, I think it's our time. I wanted to make that statement.

**Mr Kennedy:** On a point of privilege, Chair: I think it's well within the confines of the government to waste its time any way it chooses or sees fit. If it chooses to impugn another member, it should, in some way, apol-

ogize. It should take the time that it has here. They know full well that this resolution took place—

**Mr Mazzilli:** Chair, can we get back to our time?

**Mr Kennedy:** Again, I'm just speaking to the orders, Mr Chair. The orders say this is the time the government has to question the minister. They don't have the backbone or the gumption to do that. They're wasting the time instead. If they want to question me, I'm there after hours any time.

**Mr Mazzilli:** Mr Chair, we'd like our time.

*Interjections.*

**The Vice-Chair:** Order. It seems to me it is the government that started this.

**Mr Mazzilli:** I will—

**The Vice-Chair:** May I, Mr Mazzilli? If you want to continue in this regard, that's fine with me. These are only comments. But you're the one who started this request for a resolution. You're not getting an answer. Waive your time, if you have nothing more to say, and let's back to—

**Mr Mazzilli:** No, no. We have lots to say.

**The Vice-Chair:** Are we ready to proceed with estimates?

**Mr Mazzilli:** Yes, we'll proceed.

Minister, certainly from an education policy—and I know it's both tax and education—an important component in the budget, if you will, is the seniors' tax credit on the education portion of property bills, although it has nothing directly to do with your ministry. But for many, many years, seniors have paid their property taxes based on paying their share for education. I've heard from many that it's not fair. At some point, when they no longer have kids in the system, they're on fixed incomes, at a time when they can no longer afford to pay for something they no longer use, that money could be better spent by them on other things. So I certainly commend our government for that. Is that something you've heard in your community over the years, and before when you were a trustee?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I think it has been an issue for a long time that many seniors—many of them on a fixed income, as you probably know—have indicated they would like some sort of exemption or consideration given for some relief from taxes for education. So I think that decision is very consistent with the input we have received from stakeholders in the province of Ontario. I understand that is being very, very well received.

**Mr Gerretsen:** Could I ask a follow-up question on that?

**Mr Mazzilli:** No.

**Mr Gerretsen:** That's too bad.

**Mr Mazzilli:** You can certainly do that on your time.

*Interjections.*

**The Vice-Chair:** Mr Arnott?

**Mr Arnott:** I do have a question. I know we're almost at the end of the day, and I'm looking forward to going back up to the House for what's to come, but I was thinking about the time between 1985 and 1990—again, it was the Liberal opposition critic who talked about it.

Of course, that was the time when the Liberals were in office in the province of Ontario, in those first two years, 1985 to 1987, as part of a minority government, and then as a majority government between 1987 and 1990.

I seem to recall an election pledge or promise by David Peterson. I'm trying to remember if it was 1985 or 1987, but he promised to restore the provincial portion of the funding of education to 60% of the total cost of education. At that time, the property tax portion was gradually growing and the provincial portion seemed to be eroding. I was trying to remember what year that was. It was either 1985 or 1987 that the Liberals promised this. I don't know if you can recall, Minister, because I know you were certainly right in the middle of that issue at that time.

But there was also the reality, when I first ran as a candidate in 1990, that even though they had promised to increase the provincial share of funding for education to 60%, it had eroded to about 40% over the three years between 1987 and 1990. So instead of meeting and honouring their promise, it in fact eroded further to about 40%. I'm just wondering if you recall and can fill in the details for me.

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** I can recall. There was a commitment, a promise, made in 1984 that the provincial share of funding would increase to 60%. Unfortunately, at the end of the five years, there actually had been a reduction in the level of provincial funding by 6%, and I think it stood at about 40%. So unfortunately, there was a broken promise.

**Mr Arnott:** That was what I wanted to be enlightened about.

*Interjections.*

**The Vice-Chair:** We have two more minutes of time.

**Mr O'Toole:** There's another thing in our Road Ahead document—by the way, I'd recommend this as compulsory reading over the summer—about not eliminating, banning, the right to strike, but ours says that most of the negotiation process should occur during the summer when the students wouldn't be affected as much. I believe it was Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party, who had a bill before the House to eliminate the right to strike—I think he still secretly harbours that belief. Is that something you can comment on?

**Mr Gerretsen:** Maybe after a 25-day strike.

**Mr O'Toole:** I think he still believes that, but they'd never say it publicly, because they'd be on the hook with the teachers' union.

*Interjection.*

**Mr O'Toole:** No, no. Hey, keep your promises. You guys can't—

*Interjection.*

**The Vice-Chair:** Watch your language.

**Mr O'Toole:** Is there some truth to that, Minister? Have you heard that? Does that form any basis for our initiative with the right-to-strike issue in education—the Dalton McGuinty private member's bill?

**The Vice-Chair:** I would hope you had pitched that question earlier on. We have come to the end for today. Let me just wrap up before we adjourn. The ministry has three hours and three minutes left, which will resume on Tuesday, just for your information.

We stand adjourned until Tuesday immediately after routine proceedings.

*The committee adjourned at 1800.*



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