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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 19 October 2004

Mardi 19 octobre 2004

Speaker
Honourable Alvin Curling

Président
L'honorable Alvin Curling

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 19 October 2004

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 19 octobre 2004

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): I rise in the House today to speak about the 2004 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo that took place near Meaford from September 22 to 26. This is the fourth time since 1933 that Grey county has played host to this event. The IPM, as it is widely known, is the biggest outdoor farm and rural living show in Canada. It is a combination of a farm machinery show, an educational experience about rural life and an entertainment spectacular.

I would like to take this opportunity to give thanks and praise to the executive of this year's IPM. Led by co-chairs Pearl and Brian Bumstead, the executive turned the Davison farm into a 90-acre tent city that became host to over 600 exhibits that were visited by more than 80,000 people during the five-day event.

While the Bumsteads and their crew did a fantastic job, even they would have had a tough time pulling it off without the nearly 1,000 volunteers who drove shuttles, directed traffic, took tickets and did anything else they were asked to do. For my part, I had an incredible time working with my Bognor Jam Production and Promotion colleague, Arnie Clark. We organized entertainment in the lounge tent, and it was our pleasure to bring world-class musical entertainment to visitors during the day and to the trailer park residents at night.

To close, I would like to thank the three leaders in this Legislature—Dalton McGuinty, Howard Hampton, and our new leader, John Tory—for attending the match and visiting Grey county. It was great to see each of them up on a tractor, and if any of them would like more practice with this, I invite them to visit my family farm. It was great to see them plowing the manure instead of spreading it.

TERESA CASCIOLI

Ms Judy Marsales (Hamilton West): I rise in the House today to congratulate Teresa Cascioli, president and CEO of Lakeport Beverage Corp of Hamilton. Last week, Teresa was named Ontario Entrepreneur of the Year in the turnaround category by Ernst and Young. She

won this award over 32 nominees representing 29 companies in Ontario.

In 2003, Teresa was named by Profit magazine and its sister magazine, Chatelaine, as one of the top 10 women CEOs in Canada for her role in reviving Lakeport Brewing, a Hamilton company that employs over 200 staff.

Earlier this year, Teresa received the chamber of commerce Athena award, an award that recognizes women's leadership and professionalism and those who mentor in business and the professions. I am pleased to announce that Teresa Cascioli will also be receiving the Ontario Chamber of Commerce outstanding business achievement award on November 10 for outstanding leadership and achievement in business.

We in Hamilton West are extremely proud of the achievements of Teresa Cascioli and congratulate her on reviving such a successful Hamilton business, now the fourth largest brewery in Ontario.

Yesterday, the Honourable Sandra Pupatello spoke eloquently about women's achievements to commemorate the 75th anniversary of Persons Day in Canada. All I want to say to Teresa is, way to go, Teresa.

RIDEAU REGIONAL CENTRE

Mr Norman W. Sterling (Lanark-Carleton): Last month, the Minister of Community and Social Services made her now-infamous announcement that she intends to close the Rideau Regional Centre in Smiths Falls in 2009. This announcement hit like a bombshell in my riding. The facility's residents, their families and the staff were shocked to learn that this announcement contained no concrete plan to address the future needs of the residents.

Unfortunately, the minister appears to have been forced to make this hasty announcement before she was ready, after publicly musing about her intentions. I share the very concerns I am hearing from families that this decision will only serve to lower the quality of life for many of those directly affected. It will be traumatic for many of the 435 residents, their families and the staff.

With an average age in the 50s, most of the clients consider this residential facility their home. They are familiar with their surroundings and the people who work and live at the centre and are a critical part of their lives. Tearing these vulnerable people away is cruel and harsh. Many of the residents are severely challenged, both mentally and physically, and their needs simply cannot be met in the community.

I'm calling on the minister to immediately reverse this decision. Let the remaining residents live out the rest of their lives with their lifelong friends. Don't separate them from the physical and emotional surroundings which they have relied on virtually all of their lives. I will continue to advocate for the well-being of these residents and ensure they don't fall through the cracks.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to take a minute and a half to talk about the so-called Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation in Ontario, a discussion paper. What I want to say about this is, it is not an equitable allocation of busing throughout Ontario. It is, in fact, inequitable.

I also want to say that it doesn't appear to me to be a discussion paper, although yesterday the minister, in response to my question, said that this is a discussion of a draft document that may happen in terms of a formula for transportation funding. The fact of the matter is that this is not a discussion paper; this is something that is happening. Some boards are affected negatively, and some boards are affected positively. He says, "Don't worry. This is merely a discussion paper."

I want to point out to the minister that the funding for transportation purposes is being phased in this year and the following year. If it were a discussion paper, the funding would not flow this year and next. The fact that some boards are getting money for transportation and some are not is a serious, serious problem. What we say is, there are 31 boards that are not getting more money but will be getting less money this year and more cuts the following year. That's what this inequitable formula is all about.

1340

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr Shafiq Qadri (Etobicoke North): I rise in the House today to recognize the good works done by OHRIA, the Ontario Horse Racing Industry Association, especially the many charitable causes supported by the Woodbine Entertainment Group in my riding of Etobicoke North.

OHRIA plays a significant part in the economy of Ontario. It contributes \$1.2 billion in taxes and slot revenues to our great province and last year alone donated over \$600,000 to equine research programs at the University of Guelph.

On top of these impressive initiatives, individual horse racing venues make considerable efforts to support the communities in which they operate. For instance, the Woodbine Entertainment Group directly employs over 2,500 people in my riding. In addition, they donate 3% of their net revenue to charitable causes. Last year, the group donated over \$640,000 to charity and will do so again this year.

Just a few of their worthy causes: They are the sole sponsor of the Woodbine Breakfast Club, offering breakfast on a daily basis to more than 100 children. They are a major benefactor of the Dorothy Ley Hospice, which was recognized eloquently last week by the member from Etobicoke Centre. They are also patrons of the Albion Boys and Girls Club, an organization that helps kids realize their potential in many areas, including substance abuse prevention and summer camps. They also make a magnificent annual contribution to Arts Etobicoke.

I call on all members in this House to congratulate the worthy efforts of the Woodbine Entertainment Group.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): Yesterday, the government released this glossy, partisan, 16-page, self-congratulating report on their performance thus far. The Premier claimed he had stopped the slide in health care. The report makes the laughable claim that the government is improving access to health care and shortening wait times. Well, let's just say the Premier was a little liberal with the truth.

According to a report by the Fraser Institute, the government's assertion of stopping the slide is inaccurate, and their incompetence is once again exposed as health care access and wait times slide backwards. The fact is that under the McGuinty government—and I quote from the report—"Manitoba achieved the shortest total wait in 2004, 14.8 weeks, with Ontario (15.5 weeks) losing the best-access province status that it had held since 2000...."

Our government earned that title, and in little over a year, the McGuinty government's incompetence has seen Ontario's health care access and wait times decline. But it does not end there. Everything—the referral of a doctor to an appointment with a specialist has increased. The waiting time from the appointment with the specialist to actual treatment has increased from 7.1 weeks to a staggering 8.2 weeks. All of this has happened under the Liberal watch—longer wait times.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): I rise today to talk about the Olympics, which got a lot of media attention with Canadians this year. I rise today to recognize a very special athlete from my riding of Oakville. His name is Adam Van Koeverden. During the Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, Adam took home not only the bronze but also the gold medal in the sport of sprint kayaking. This victory, being the highest achievement in athletic competition, is a true honour.

Adam's dedication, discipline and talent to the sport have driven his success and enabled him to reach his goal. At the age of 22, Adam is a natural leader who continues to inspire a generation of children, athletes and, above all, his fellow Canadians as he continues his studies at McMaster University in Hamilton.

A celebration was held in Oakville to showcase not only Adam's accomplishments but also the accomplishments of two other Olympian participants from Oakville: Oskar Johansson placed 15th in sailing and Andrew Hurd finished fifth in the finals of the men's swimming relay and set a new Canadian record. Oakville citizens, athletes from the Oakville community and the mayor and members of council came to the event to recognize their efforts and to celebrate their accomplishments.

I'm extremely proud of these Oakville athletes. I look forward to other opportunities to highlight the achievements of athletes in my riding, as you never know when that young athlete you know on your own street or in your own neighbourhood can one day become an Olympic winner.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Liz Sandals (Guelph-Wellington): Yesterday, the leader of the third party once again exemplified how to be a member of the irresponsible opposition. When the member was asked about our government's hiring of over 1,000 new teachers, he stated, "Go out there and try to find a school board where that's happened, because the school boards will tell you it hasn't happened." Well, the fact of the matter is, we have hired 1,100 new teachers. Not only have we hired new teachers, we have reduced class sizes; 1,300 schools across this province now have classes of 20 or under. This has been made possible by the government's \$800 million in new school funding for education.

If the member wants to talk about rural schools, we'll talk about rural schools. More schools than ever before qualify for rural school funding. This government has given an extra \$31 million to rural schools in the past year.

Here is what the rural school boards have to say. Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board said, "We are happy because there is an appreciation that boards like ours that cover such a huge geographical area are finally being recognized through adjustments to the (funding) formula." Thames Valley: "This money is very much appreciated." Grand Erie: "This is good news."

We are investing in our education system.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): There's been some talk, both around here and in my riding, that hospital beds are closing. I'd like to make it clear that this is certainly not the case. The McGuinty government has invested almost \$470 million in Ontario's hospitals. That is an increase of 4.3% over last year.

In Peterborough and surrounding area, we have invested \$8.8 million in our local hospitals. That money has been used to hire more nurses and start cutting down on surgery wait times. We're also working on cutting down the burden on our hospitals and emergency rooms. To that end, we have locally invested more than \$1 mil-

lion in mental health services, \$1.2 million in community care access centres, more than half a million dollars in community support services, and almost \$1 million in long-term care. That's roughly \$12 million invested in the Peterborough area since the McGuinty government came to power.

Let's not forget the years of Tory mismanagement that left us with our troubled health care system. Do you remember Mike Harris saying he'd push through his agenda without "touching a penny of health care funding"? I do. That was before he shut down 44 hospitals and fired 10,000 nurses.

We're doing things differently. We're transforming health care by investing in health services in our communities throughout Ontario. We're putting our hospitals on a sustainable path, making them more accessible, more responsible and more accountable.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND FORFEITED PROPERTY MANAGEMENT STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EXÉCUTION DE LA LOI ET L'ADMINISTRATION DES BIENS CONFISQUÉS

Mr Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to enforcement powers, penalties and the management of property forfeited, or that may be forfeited, to the Crown in right of Ontario as a result of organized crime, marijuana growing and other unlawful activities / *Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les pouvoirs d'exécution, les pénalités et l'administration des biens confisqués ou pouvant être confisqués au profit de la Couronne du chef de l'Ontario par suite d'activités de crime organisé et de culture de marijuana ainsi que d'autres activités illégales.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Minister of Community Safety?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I'll be making a statement under ministerial statements.

1350

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Mr Milloy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 129, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act / *Projet de loi 129, Loi modifiant le Code de la route.*

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): This bill, if passed, amends the Highway Traffic Act to make it mandatory for anyone using in-line skates, a skateboard or any other type of muscle-powered vehicle to wear a helmet. At present, all cyclists in Ontario are required to wear helmets, but regulations passed by the government exempted individuals over the age of 18 from this requirement. This bill removes the government's power to make such exceptions, making it mandatory for all cyclists to wear helmets. It does, however, provide for exemptions for those who cannot wear a helmet due to religious beliefs.

VISITORS

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a delegation here, Mr Speaker, I'd like to welcome from Calabria, Italy. We have Professor Caterina Borrelli, Marco Marchese, Massimo Esposito and Angelo Sposato.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ELDER ABUSE

Hon John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, minister responsible for seniors): I am honoured today to rise in the Legislature as minister responsible for seniors on this, the first provincial Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Ontario.

As you may recall, earlier this year this Legislature passed a resolution sponsored by MPP David Zimmer calling for an Elder Abuse Awareness Day, and I'm pleased that we will recognize today as Elder Abuse Awareness Day. At the same time, I'm sure we are all sad that the need for such a day exists. Although the vast majority of seniors are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve, for a small percentage, abuse is a reality.

To pretend that elder abuse doesn't exist would mean abandoning our responsibilities to those seniors who have suffered abuse or are at risk of being abused. Elder abuse has no place in our Ontario. Seniors have the right to live in safety and security. Our government is committed to maintaining safe, strong communities for all Ontarians, which is why we continue to improve programs and services in this area.

Just over a week ago, our Premier, Premier McGuinty, announced that Ontario will be hiring 600 nurses and 1,400 front-line staff to provide a new, improved standard of care for our long-term-care residents, including having a registered nurse available at all times. We will be providing additional services to assist patients moving from hospitals to long-term-care facilities, and we will

also be providing a Web site and public reporting system to enhance care standards. We will be increasing the comfort allowance to put more discretionary income into the hands of low-income, long-term-care residents. This is the first such increase in almost 20 years. And we froze the accommodation costs for our long-term-care residents. For the first time since 1993, residents' accommodation costs will not increase during a fiscal year.

I could go on about how this government is helping seniors with \$1.3 billion in home care services this year or our investment of \$29.2 million in community care and supportive housing services, but that will be a subject and a statement for another day.

Today, Elder Abuse Awareness Day, is the day for us to improve our understanding of what elder abuse is and how to prevent it, and our opportunity to help others do the same. Elder abuse is generally defined as any act or omission that harms a senior or jeopardizes his or her health or welfare. Elder abuse can take the form of financial, emotional or physical abuse and neglect. By becoming more informed on the topic together, all Ontarians can help prevent elder abuse.

Elder Abuse Awareness Day complements the public education initiatives of our strategy to combat elder abuse, the first strategy of its kind in Canada. Our strategy, developed by the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat in my ministry, focuses on three important priorities: coordinated local services to help abused seniors, staff training, and public education.

In the event of abuse or suspected abuse, people must know where they can go for help. My colleague the Attorney General will be providing more detail on this point following my remarks.

At the next federal-provincial-territorial meeting of ministers responsible for seniors, I will be advocating with my colleagues for the establishment of Elder Abuse Awareness Days in other provinces and territories, as well as the establishment of a national Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Canada.

Internationally, the World Health Organization and the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse have announced their intention to launch an annual international Elder Abuse Awareness Day in 2006. We will work with the international community on a common day. In the meantime, however, we felt it was simply too important to wait, and that is why we've declared this day as Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Today in communities across Ontario, local elder abuse networks are marking this important day with open houses, candlelight vigils and other public-awareness-raising activities. Public education is an important tool in effectively addressing elder abuse, and our government, along with the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, is asking members of this House to join with us in helping to promote this very important day as we move forward.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): I would like to thank Minister Gerretsen for sharing his time with me to recognize Elder

Abuse Awareness Day. Special thanks and congratulations to my great parliamentary assistant, the MPP for Willowdale, David Zimmer, for his dedication in addressing this issue. Last spring, David Zimmer introduced a private member's resolution in this House, and that has led directly to the declaration of Elder Abuse Awareness Day. It's because of his actions that we are here today casting light on a disturbing problem that for too long has been shrouded in darkness.

Victims of elder abuse are often too afraid, isolated or embarrassed to speak out. Mr Zimmer called elder abuse one of the last silent issues of our society. So the first step is obviously to raise awareness of the issue itself. Elder abuse is an important component of our government's domestic violence action plan. It's through awareness that victims of elder abuse will understand that they don't need to live in fear or be embarrassed by the abuse they suffer. Through greater awareness, they will know that they can and should reach out for the support they need and that when they do extend their hand for help, their government is there to assist.

Our government is committed to helping to ensure that all victims get the support they deserve. With respect to elder abuse, we have already taken steps to improve the province's victim support line as part of the government's overall strategy to combat elder abuse. Information counsellors who answer calls on the victim support line are trained to offer help to victims of elder abuse. These counsellors understand the dynamics of elder abuse and the psychological aspects that need to be considered when speaking to a senior who may be a victim of this type of abuse. They have been trained to identify the signs and the reasons why seniors may not report it. Counsellors will point callers in the right direction so that they know where to turn in their home community to find the necessary support and services. Victims of elder abuse or anyone concerned about the well-being of a senior are encouraged to call the victim support line. The toll-free number is 1-888-579-2888.

Seniors deserve to be treated with respect, and seniors deserve to be protected from harm. By working together, by raising awareness, by providing assistance through the victim support line, by pointing seniors in the direction of the services they need to recover from elder abuse, we are taking great strides toward protecting seniors from harm and giving them the respect they deserve.

1400

MARIJUANA GROW HOUSES

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I rise this afternoon to make an important announcement that will help make Ontario communities safer for all residents. The McGuinty government intends to do whatever it can to control indoor marijuana grow operations in Ontario. Let me be very clear: We have a plan to deal with the proliferation of these operations that threaten the safety of our communities. The legislation I introduced this afternoon is just the first step in that plan, one that will help

create stronger, safer and more livable communities for all Ontario residents.

Marijuana grow houses are a blight on our neighbourhoods. In York, Peel and Waterloo regions combined, it is estimated that 17% of grow ops were located within 500 metres of a primary or secondary school. They are a problem we all share and they are a problem we must all work together to solve. The Toronto Police Service, for example, has made 248 busts so far this year, resulting in police confiscating more than 83,275 plants.

After the very successful Green Tide Summit that my ministry co-hosted in March with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, I made a personal commitment to continue to work with my cabinet colleagues so that the McGuinty government can maintain its leadership role in this area.

The proposed legislation, if passed, will stiffen laws affecting a number of different areas. The proposed legislation, if passed, would:

(1) allow an electricity distributor to disconnect hydro without notice in accordance with a court order or for emergency, safety or system-reliability reasons;

(2) require building inspections of all homes that police confirm contain a grow op. If building inspectors deem the property unsafe, they are required to issue orders for repair. This would protect people from purchasing a property that would require thousands of dollars of repairs;

(3) double the maximum penalties under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, for any contraventions of the Ontario fire code, such as tampering with wiring that would cause excessive heating that would lead to a fire, something commonly done in grow ops;

(4) set up a special-purpose account so that the proceeds of grow ops and other criminal activities, such as real estate, vehicles and other equipment, can be spent on enforcement, crime prevention and compensating victims.

Police and the private sector asked for the tools to combat grow ops. Today we are giving them those tools.

Many of these grow operators have ties to organized crime and depend on new immigrants and their families to crop-sit. Everyone in society suffers because of these unscrupulous operators.

My ministry co-hosted, with the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Green Tide Summit last March. It was the first time that various levels of government, the policing community, the financial sector, the real estate sector, public utilities and other stakeholders had been in the same room at the same time. We shared a great deal of information. We learned of each other's challenges. In the end, we agreed that the best way to control these operators was as a unified group.

There was a common theme: the importance of continuing to build our relationships begun at the summit and to share information. We heard what delegates had to say and we acted accordingly.

That's why, in addition to the legislation I'm introducing this afternoon, I'm pleased to announce that we have implemented another recommendation of the summit,

and that summit will start with the committee tomorrow. I'm sure that when we get their recommendations and we implement them, we will provide a much safer place for the people of Ontario.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased today to stand to respond to the legislation introduced by Minister Kwinter. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, who have been the lead in any type of legislation around marijuana grow ops. I know they developed the Green Tide report, and there were a number of recommendations in that leading to the summit. Of course, there are some concerns that we have today around the legislation that we expect will be answered in any type of committee hearings that may be held.

First of all, I see this today as a zero-dollar announcement for law and order in this province.

First of all, I believe as part of the government's election platform they did call for 1,000 new police officers. Once this bill does become law, police in this province will be expected to do more with less, unless we see more police officers announced. The legislation will place an even greater demand on police without providing any more human resources and funding as well.

The one thing I'm not sure of—and we just got a pile of documents from the minister's office—the legislation, I believe, targets only residential indoor grow ops. I'm not so sure it includes factories or grow ops like we saw at the former Molson brewery in Barrie, Ontario, that drew a lot of attention to the grow ops. First of all, I think we have to have an explanation. If it doesn't include those types of facilities, why not? That is where the bulk of the marijuana is grown in indoor facilities.

If the government is really serious about the issue, they should be targeting the drug criminals with tougher sentencing, not the threat of someone pulling a hydro switch. The minister talks about doubling the penalties under this legislation for contraventions of the Ontario fire code, but what about penalties under the Criminal Code, and what is the concern for tougher sentencing?

I have to go for just a moment to the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police resolution in June 2003. It says:

“Be it resolved that” the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police “call upon the Premier of Ontario to represent the interests of the law enforcement and community safety within Ontario by urging” once again “the government of Canada to enact immediate” legislation “to provide for minimum sentences of two years as a deterrent for the cultivation of marijuana.”

And another question I have to ask is if the minister has consulted on what the federal government is doing about the decriminalization of marijuana. We have no idea what they are doing. I know I'm out of time, and Mr Jackson wants to respond as well.

ELDER ABUSE

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): Truly, all members of this House will support an elder abuse day.

Frankly, to the point, every day should be elder abuse awareness day in this province, and I know we agree on that.

I had hoped that the minister might have taken the occasion to talk about a whole series of programs that were implemented by our government. We're very proud of those, and I'm sure all members of the House are proud of these initiatives.

First of all, the elder abuse strategy, the first of its kind in the world, presented by Dr Elizabeth Podnieks on behalf of our government in Spain two and a half years ago: She has not been given the assurances that the \$4.3 million we committed, and she's been spending, will be renewed.

The Alzheimer's strategy, the first of its kind in North America: Again, a five-year commitment of \$68 million. We have not yet heard from the government on that.

Hang Up On Fraud and Phonebusters, a joint US-Ontario initiative with the OPP and police: No word on that.

Telemarketing screening registry for seniors: No word from the government on that.

The tele-senior program to file objections for age discrimination: We are waiting to hear on that.

The Ontario Residential Care Association's seniors' retirement home complaint registry line: No response from the government.

The seniors' safe medication program with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association: We are still waiting to hear from the government if they are going to support the program.

The Memory Project of the Dominion Institute, recognizing the sacrifice of our veterans, and the expansion of women's shelters with staff training designated for seniors' beds: These are initiatives started by our government that all members of this House support, and we're anxious to hear from the government.

I've mentioned Dr Elizabeth Podnieks, and I think she should be acknowledged today. I'm disappointed that for whatever reason she cannot be here today. She is considered a world expert, and she has led us in a direction that has made our province a better and safer place to be.

Finally, if you are going to list the accomplishments of your government, let's remind seniors that you are in fact increasing their hydro bills; you took away their Ontario home property tax relief, netting them out—about a thousand dollars more you're costing the average senior in this province; and you removed OHIP coverage for chiropractic and physiotherapy.

1410

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats are pleased to express our abhorrence for elder abuse. New Democrats have been consistent and clear in advocating and supporting reforms and agendas which protect our parents and our grandparents.

We hear from the government in its statement today that it's concerned about the well-being of seniors. If you're concerned about the well-being of seniors, why don't you keep your promise to ensure that our folks and

grandfolks in long-term-care facilities are given a minimum of two baths per week while in those facilities? You say you're concerned with our seniors. Then why don't you keep your promise to ensure that there are registered nurses on duty 24/7 in our long-term-care facilities? You say you are concerned about our seniors. Then keep your promise to maintain and sustain 2.25 hours of hands-on care per day for our folks and grandparents in long-term-care facilities.

You say you are concerned about our seniors, yet your privatization-of-electricity agenda is forcing hydro rates to skyrocket so that increasing numbers of seniors are going to be forced into homelessness because of your very specific policy around hydro privatization.

You say you're concerned about seniors, but the McGuinty Liberal government is clawing back \$200 million under the drug benefit plan, which will deny so many of our seniors life-sustaining medication, prescription drugs that doctors will be encouraged not to prescribe them.

You say you're concerned about our seniors, yet you are pursuing the Conservative agenda of the privatization of our home care system so that valuable, historic, long-time home care providers from the non-profit sector, like the Victorian Order of Nurses and Red Cross nurses, are being knocked out of their jobs and replaced by for-profit, more often than not American-based, privatized so-called home care companies.

I say this government, if it's really concerned about seniors, will get busy with a meaningful investment in those things that would make seniors' lives truly more productive and healthier. This government isn't part of the solution; it's been part of the problem.

MARIJUANA GROW HOUSES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Let me say to the Minister of Community Safety: Here we have it, Reefer Madness, part II. I want the minister to understand that the sequel is never as good as the original film.

Look, you want to make our communities safer? I say to the Minister of Community Safety, this government should keep its promise to put 1,000 new cops on the streets of Ontario. That will make our communities safer. That will give people more confidence in their safety and security in their communities.

Minister, you can't flog this horse any more. The horse is not even at the gate. People don't believe this government when it tries to divert their attention and focus their attention on a problem that the police already have the legislation to deal with. The problem is, and you well know it and the cops out there on the streets know it, that there are simply not enough police officers and enough police resources to effect the investigations, the arrests and the subsequent prosecutions that they have to bring these offenders into hand. In fact, there are credible newspaper columnists—not me, mind you, but credible newspaper columnists—who are querying, questioning, has this minister been accessing the evidence

locker and getting his stash out of some of the proceeds of those raids? I mean, the question's been asked, Minister: What is it that you're smoking?

People are concerned about kids out there shooting each other with guns. People are concerned about the highways of this province and the absolute lack of policing on those highways, the 400 series highways among others. People are concerned about backlogs once again in our courts that lead the courts increasingly into encouraging plea bargaining so that serious offenders, including offenders against spouses and domestic partners, including the perpetrators of serious assaults, are being encouraged and facilitated as they plead in to lesser and lesser offences. People are concerned in this province about a correctional system that's being privatized, not only putting correctional officers at risk but putting communities at risk. People are concerned when a minister of children's services assists Syl Apps down in Oakville in breaking the union of 140-plus trained, skilled public sector union workers there so that a privatized operation is being paid as much as \$600 a day to care for each one of their charges.

New Democrats will do everything we can to make our communities safer. We won't participate in this government's fear campaign and in its bizarre attempt to divert attention from its defaults and its defects.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you. Deferred votes? It's time for—

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for this Legislature to direct the government to have its committee promptly inquire into the causes and reasons for the termination of the employment of the vice-president of Toronto's major hospital and to begin meeting in that regard promptly.

The Speaker: The member from Niagara Centre requests unanimous consent to move this motion. Do I have the consent of the House? No.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr Robert W. Runciman (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Minister of Health. I want to spend some time dealing with the way you treat people, specifically men and women in our hospital sector. In the press today, you're quoted as saying that you'd be hard-pressed to recall yelling at or bullying members of the health care sector. You then admitted that you bring, and I'm quoting, "a forceful attitude" to your job. Minister, just how forceful have you been with some hospital stakeholders? Have you yelled at any? Have you, in one of your forceful attitude moments, physically intimidated someone? Has your approach always been appropriate, Minister?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I have, in the days since becoming

Minister of Health, had the opportunity to engage with countless thousands of stakeholders in the health sector, and my record stands. There is, related to that, a great body of evidence from local community newspapers talking about the visits I've made to, I think, about 40 or 45 hospitals in Ontario.

I appreciate the question from the honourable member because he's trying to change his spots. It seems interesting to have a question from a gentleman who has earned a certain moniker for his time in politics, but more importantly, he served with pleasure and pride, I think, in a government that went to such an extent possible that they demeaned nurses and called them Hula Hoops.

Mr Runciman: I could be forceful, but not with my stakeholders. I didn't hear an answer to a very direct and important question.

There's a growing cloud over this minister. Good people are concerned about his approach, his efforts to intimidate, and a spreading culture of fear he is spawning in the hospital sector. We are hearing from a significant number of hospital officials that they consider your personal approach abrasive and confrontational. It's one thing to be forceful; it's quite another to be in-your-face belligerent and threatening. That's what we're hearing. That's the Smitherman approach.

Minister, your officials have expressly prohibited hospitals from being critical of your government in terms of their balanced budget plans. Why are you muzzling hospital officials and forbidding them to talk about the implications of your funding policies? Is this the open and accountable government the Liberal Party promised Ontarians just one year ago?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the question by the honourable member. The fact of the matter is that Ontario hospitals are, as they always have been, free to communicate in the fashion they see fit. I had the opportunity earlier today in conversation with the media, which I think had representation from opposition parties, to make the point that I felt that if Sick Kids Hospital had, in their own right, chosen to do something related to the employment status of an employee, that was a decision they took.

Yesterday, I said very clearly and categorically that I had no involvement, that my ministry had no involvement. This has been confirmed by the chair of the board of that hospital in public comment. Even further, the dance partner of the official opposition lead critic on this item today said there was no proof.

1420

Mr Runciman: I'm glad the minister raised the dismissal of Ms DeGiusti, because that's a concern on this side of the House and is, I believe, shared by the third party in this place.

The minister attempts to indicate no involvement of his officials. What he is talking about, what he is saying, and we'd like him to be even more explicit, is, "We had nothing to do with the dismissal of Ms DeGiusti. We didn't demand it."

I ask the minister today, did anyone in your office, in your political office, including your executive assistant or

anyone in your ministry, call officials at Sick Kids expressing a concern about Ms DeGiusti's comments publicly to the Toronto Star? If that call occurred, Mr Minister, and if you take a look at this culture of fear that you've created within and without the health care sector, if that indeed proves to be the case, if someone in your office or someone in your ministry called Sick Kids expressing concern, if that becomes a public fact, will you resign?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member asked a very direct question with respect to the potential involvement of anyone in my office. He referenced my executive assistant, as an example. The answer clearly is no.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Minister, yesterday we talked about the devastating cuts you're making to the Queensway Carleton Hospital and to the Ottawa Hospital, the jobs cuts in Sault Ste Marie and Cornwall and the effects that will have on patient care at the Hospital for Sick Children.

Now we learn in a new report released this week that waiting times in Ontario under your watch are actually on the rise. Do you think that all of these cuts you're making to health care will actually reduce waiting lists or do you think cutting it will make it better?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's only the honourable member who could see \$1 billion in new investments in Ontario's hospitals as a cut. But I find it very interesting, in fact possibly desperate, to see the official opposition clinging to a report by their favourite group, the Fraser Institute, which in its very own preface to its report says, "The contents of the survey have been evaluated to the extent possible by comparing the survey results to other sources of information."

In the province of Ontario, we inherited a circumstance where the previous government did no preparatory work whatsoever to establish appropriate wait time registries. But working as we are in concert with the provinces all across the land, with Ontario in a leadership role, building on the strength of what has been done in Saskatchewan, engaging the efforts of Dr Peter Glynn, the Canadian expert on this, we will make this progress, we'll do it quickly and we'll demonstrate to Ontarians what the real situation is and what results are proving.

Mr Baird: Thank you, Minister. You can quote from the report. So can I. It says, "Among the provinces, Manitoba achieved the shortest total wait in 2004 ... with Ontario ... losing the 'best access'" record in the country. Let's look at the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order, member for Nepean-Carleton.

I hope I get the same co-operation I got from the opposition when you were answering the question. I'm not getting that. I'd like to hear the member for Nepean-Carleton put his supplementary question.

Mr Baird: Waiting lists for referral to a specialist have gone from 7.1 weeks to 8.2 weeks. Weeks waited to receive an MRI have gone down in recent years but are now on the rise by a 20% increase on your watch.

Minister, will you now not admit that your cuts to hospital funding, well below the rate of inflation, have made it intolerable for hospitals? Nurses will lose their jobs and waiting lists will continue to rise. Will you now stand in your place and admit the folly of your ways and that you have to invest more money in our public hospitals? Would you do that, Minister?

Hon Mr Smitherman: We are investing more money in our public hospitals, \$700 million more than your Magna budget called for. And the continued reliance of this party on the Fraser Institute, which itself is a proponent of two-tier medicine, is the very example of where that party, in government, acted and where that party, under the leadership of John Tory, stands.

Mr Baird: You have no benchmarks for which the people of Ontario can hold you accountable.

There is an alternative. You've already proven in this House that you're not prepared to invest anywhere near a major part of the money from the new health care premium in our hospitals. You've said you will not spend a dime of the old federal health money in our hospitals. But, Minister, there is a way. There is \$825 million of new funds flowing to our health care system in Ontario. What we need is that there has to be a will for there to be a way. What we seem to lack in Ontario is a Minister of Health who will stand up and advocate for our public hospitals. Of that \$825 million of new, unallocated money, will you stand in your place and say you will put a majority of those funds to work for patients in our public hospitals, and if you won't, will you step aside and let someone else do the job?

Hon Mr Smitherman: The honourable member continues to demonstrate a lack of awareness about the Ontario health care system, that it's a system and that all of its parts must, for once, be funded appropriately and function together. The member continues to rely upon hospitals because this is the legacy of their party while in government. For the first period of time, in two out of the first three years, they cut hospital funding by \$557 million, and in the last five years of their mandate, at the extraordinary expense of all other services, while the provision of doctors' services declined because they wouldn't fund an appropriate number of them, they threw all the money they had at hospitals.

The point is very clear: For two years they cut hospital funding by \$557 million. Subsequently, they made investments only for hospitals and at the expense of all other parts of the health care system. We've made an investment in the transformation of health care, moving forward with community-based investments designed to provide care for people where they need it, earlier on and not just in hospitals. There is more to a health care system than hospitals.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order, member for Nepean-Carleton. New question.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Your bullying has created a climate of fear in Ontario hospitals, and it has cost the Hospital for Sick Children's child advocate, Cyndy DeGiusti, her job. Today's Toronto Star says that DeGiusti was forced out after blowing the whistle about cuts to hospital services for kids. DeGiusti was given no choice by hospital management because you and your government are pressuring the hospital to keep quiet about cuts to hospital services. Yesterday we asked you to call an emergency committee meeting to find out the details of why she was forced out. Earlier today you said it was wrong that she was forced out. Well, if you admit it's wrong, are you prepared to hold the committee meeting so we can find out the murky details of why somebody so dedicated was forced to leave her job?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): It's a very interesting approach that is being followed by the third party today around the Legislature of Ontario. Now we have this question by the leader of the third party that stands in rather sharp contrast to the comments of his very own critic, who said, "I have no proof that he caused the tension." The record is clear on this subject. The Sick Kids Hospital board chair has clearly said there was no involvement whatsoever from the ministry. I answered a very direct question, with respect to the involvement, by the acting legislative leader of the official opposition. More to the point, it's very clear that in the province, Ontario's hospitals are independent corporations. They make their own decisions with respect to hiring and firing and the conditions under which people operate. What I said this morning was that if they have acted at Sick Kids Hospital in response to a newspaper story, they did so on their own, and that if the decision they took was on that basis, I felt it wasn't right.

Mr Hampton: You can't fob this off on to the hospital, because as the Toronto Star correctly notes, this view that you are bullying and intimidating hospital administrators was backed up by two senior hospital administrators interviewed by the Star, both of whom asked not to mention their name. "Everybody is chilled, there will be consequences for not toeing the line," said one administrator." You know that your government issued instructions to hospitals telling them that when they issue communications about your budget strategy for hospitals, they had better not disagree, they had better toe the government line. You said earlier today that it's wrong for Cyndy DeGiusti to lose her job. What is your government going to do about it? Will you hold a committee meeting to determine why someone so dedicated was forced out after she dared criticize your government?

1430

Hon Mr Smitherman: I'm very happy to repeat to the honourable member what I've said several times now, and that is what is obviously the situation at hand. Sick Kids Hospital, like about 153 other hospitals in the province, is an independent hospital corporation. They make

their own decisions. They perhaps did so—what I've said is if they made a decision because they were in some sense unsettled by the newspaper story, then I believe that they've acted wrong. I've said very, very clearly—in a media scrum earlier today that was attended by representatives of both parties—that all across Ontario, hospitals are engaged, many of them, in a very public conversation about the challenges we're working on together.

But the key point is that we are working on these things together, that we've extended to 18 months the period to get budgets into balance at the very direct request of Ontario's hospitals. We have a process that is established. It has seven points to it. We're at the very earliest stages of it, and rather than being engaged in this kind of innuendo conversation like the honourable members want, what we're involved in is rolling up our shirt sleeves and working with hospitals to get them in balance over a period of 18 months through a very well-developed process that the hospitals themselves have helped to develop.

Mr Hampton: This is indeed curious. The minister says that this person shouldn't have lost her job at Sick Kids Hospital. We've got other hospital administrators across the province saying, "Everybody is chilled, there will be consequences for not toeing the line"—the McGuinty government line.

Minister, I remember when you and Dalton McGuinty used to criticize the Conservatives for bullying and intimidation, but here is the situation: She criticizes your government on Saturday and says that this is going to result in cuts in hospital services for children. On Monday she loses her job. On Tuesday, a source says she was forced out by the hospital.

You now say it's wrong. Well, Minister, if it's wrong, will you join with us in asking the hospital to reverse the termination of this dedicated advocate for children at Sick Children's Hospital?

Hon Mr Smitherman: In exactly the same way that it would be inappropriate for me to seek the removal of an employee, it is of course not my place to get involved and to tell someone that they should rehire them.

However, I put on the public record my view—and it is the view of our government—that if Sick Kids Hospital acted as they did on their own, as the board chair has clearly said, in a fashion that was related to this story, which has not been confirmed, but if they did do that, then I've said it's my view that this isn't right, I don't condone it and that they should take appropriate action. But very, very clearly, under all the laws of the province of Ontario, it is their action to take.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Health: It's not just hospital administrators at Sick Kids. It's hospital administrators across this province who are afraid to speak out, and the Toronto Star correctly records that. They won't talk, and

this is particularly true in northern Ontario, where 80% of northern hospitals are forecasting they will have to make cuts this year. Four out of every five hospitals in northern Ontario will have to make cuts because you are strong-arming them without giving them proper funding. That will mean that northern Ontario residents will have to wait longer for health services and will see some of those hospital services disappear.

So I'm asking not just with respect to Cyndy DeGiusti but with respect to all of these hospitals that are now facing cuts: Will you stop your bullying and will you recognize that they can't continue with the kind of budget restrictions you're putting on them now?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would say to the honourable member that I'm working very closely with my caucus colleagues from northern Ontario. I recognize that there are particular challenges for the smallest and most rural hospitals in our province, because they have a smaller base to spread administrative costs. We're looking very carefully at this information as it flows back in at this very early stage in the process.

What needs to be repeated, because I think that some members are not necessarily understanding it well enough, is that we have a process that's been established. We've done that with Ontario's hospitals. We're going to work with them over a period of 18 months to get them in balance, because we think this is a critical advancement for the future sustainability of our health care system. There's a seven-step process that has been established. We're rolling up our sleeves and getting down to work, and we're doing this on a case-by-case basis with Ontario hospitals.

The member wants to talk about individual hospitals. I'm very pleased to take that information, and we'll do our best to resolve these situations in a fashion that is the sustainability of health care.

I would just say to the honourable member, you were part of a government that cut 8,000 hospital beds in our province. But way worse than that, you're the ones who have led to doctor shortages in the province and you should take responsibility for that action.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Health says that people don't understand. I think Cyndy DeGiusti understands now. She criticizes the government and your funding cuts on Saturday, and on Monday she's told, "You're out the door." I think they all understand very clearly now. This is exactly the kind of bullying and intimidation that you used to criticize the Conservatives for.

Let me give you another example. I could give you examples from Sault Ste Marie, from Sioux Lookout, but I'll take Kapuskasing Sensenbrenner Hospital, as confirmed in the Northern Times newspaper, where they're facing a 4% budget cut on top of the budget cuts that were forced on them by the Conservatives. Hospital officials say that these cuts are going to be draconian and extremely frustrating. They will lose some services. Other hospital services people will be forced to wait longer and longer for.

Minister, this hospital wants to know, other hospitals want to know, will you stop your campaign of intimidation and bullying? Will you recognize that these hospitals can't provide the services on the budget line that you put them on?

Hon Mr Smitherman: First, I remind the honourable member that every hospital in Ontario got more money this year than last year. With respect to small hospitals, in an earlier supplementary I had an opportunity to speak to that challenge particularly.

But the honourable member, in the run-up to his question, mentioned two hospitals, Sioux Lookout hospital and Sault Area Hospital. These are both hospitals where in the course of my year in office I've had the opportunity to sit down and meet with the boards. I can assure you that those were productive meetings.

In Sioux Lookout, as an example, I'm particularly committed to the advancement of the Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre because of the work that it does with the First Nations communities. I believe that that hospital's future in the health care system in Ontario is certainly more secure than the hospitals in Sioux Lookout were under the administration of previous governments.

I'm acknowledging that we have lots of work to do here, but if we're going to have a health care system, we've got to be able to make it sustainable. That means making sure that all those non-clinical areas are operating in as efficient a manner as possible.

Mr Hampton: The member mentions Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre in Sioux Lookout. Just after you visited, I got a call from the treasurer saying, "He doesn't understand how drastically underfunded we are. He doesn't understand how many services we may lose or we may have to cut."

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): Now he's going to lose his job.

Mr Hampton: He can't. He's just a treasurer. He doesn't work at the hospital, so George will have trouble hatching his job.

Let's take St Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton. Officials say that they have cut all they can already, but you're forcing them to cut another \$11.5 million to meet your budget line.

Then there's the Hamilton Health Sciences centre. They say they will have to cut another \$10 million—cuts that will affect the quality of care for patients.

Minister, from Kapuskasing to Hamilton to Sick Kids, hospitals are reeling from your misguided hospital funding policies. Will you stop the intimidation and the bullying and recognize that there's a serious problem here and you have to fix it now?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I know the honourable member wants to demand a resolution to this on his terms, and right now too. But the fact of the matter is that we have established a process. It's going to take place over 18 months and it's got a variety of elements to it.

On the issue that the honourable member raises about Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre, it's interesting that treasurer would have that view. But what I'm working toward

is a meeting that will take place including federal officials. Meno-Ya-Win Health Centre is particularly complex as it's the merge, if you will, between a federally funded hospital and a provincial one. I'm of the opinion that that hospital, when we are completed with our work, will stand out as a centre of excellence in the province of Ontario for aboriginal health care. I'm very, very proud of the work we're doing on that. I know the member takes a keen interest in it as it's in his riding.

What I think it makes the point about—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Thank you.

Hon Mr Smitherman: —is we have 154 unique hospital corporations. We're going to work through these on a case-by-case basis over a period of 18 months. None of the cuts or what have you that the member has raised have taken effect and they will not until such time as we've had a chance to review the plan.

1440

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mrs Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener-Waterloo): My question is also to the Minister of Health. Despite your vehement denials, organizations, groups and individuals continue to tell us about your bullying behaviour, behaviour that I can tell you is creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation in the health sector. It gives the clear impression that any negative comments could come at a price. In fact, today we read in the Toronto Star that this view is backed up by two senior hospital executives. Indeed, one said, "Everybody is chilled, there will be consequences for not toeing the line." Minister, do you think it is appropriate behaviour for you, as a minister of the crown, to create such an atmosphere of fear and intimidation?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I find it interesting that a member in the same parliamentary caucus as the member from Simcoe-Grey would be there. It's interesting to note a quote of his from the legislative Hansard of October 10, 2002, "Minister Threatens to Fire Bureaucrats." Here's the quote:

"Northern Development and Mines Minister Jim Wilson says he will fire any health ministry bureaucrats who talk to opposition critics.

"It's not a threat, it's a promise," Wilson told the Legislature yesterday."

The point here is that in the course of serving in the role of Minister of Health for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order.

Hon Mr Smitherman: In the course of serving as Minister of Health for a year, I've had countless hundreds of opportunities to meet with thousands of health care stakeholders. I believe the member significantly misses the point about the work we're doing, and I believe the record demonstrates that.

Mrs Witmer: I think this minister needs to recognize that he's now the government, and that the atmosphere of

fear and intimidation that has been created in the health sector, particularly the hospital sector, has been created by himself. I ask you, Minister—this is a very serious question—why are there so many people in the health sector who are afraid or feel intimidated or threatened about saying anything in public that is critical of your ministry or this Liberal government for fear of retribution?

Hon Mr Smitherman: Here again the member reminds me that I am now in government because she seeks to have her record from government absented from the discussion. But I think it's helpful to put on the record that in her government's time in office, in the Ministry of Health they went to the extraordinary action of appointing nine supervisors. What is a supervisor? A supervisor is the application of the powers of nuclear weaponry by the Minister of Health. They move in and wipe out hospital boards and CEOs all at once. This is the record of that party while in government: nine times local accountability and governance gone, local leadership gone. Now they suggest that, because we're seeking to bring about change in the health care sector, we have a record that is really their record.

The fact of the matter is, we've got some difficult work to do. We're doing that hand in hand with Ontario hospitals over the next 18 months on a case-by-case basis. I believe we're going to make considerable progress for the people of Ontario.

Mrs Witmer: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This minister doesn't need supervisors. He has Bill 8.

The Speaker: It's not a point of order. New question.

FIRES AT WASTE TRANSFER STATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. A fire that ignited last week at a waste transfer site still burns in Vaughan. Close to a week later, it continues to blaze, and now contaminated water from the site is flooding the streets and sewers of Vaughan.

Minister, this is Walkerton déjà vu all over again. The telltale signs of a crisis were all there. You were warned about them and did nothing. MOE has been fielding calls from local residents outraged over the mountains of illegal waste, reaching as high as 10 storeys, growing outside their window. I've also learned that there were compliance orders issued against the company for violating the amount of waste allowed on the site. With this fire and five fires that went before it in the past two months, it is clear that those orders were not followed up on. Minister, why did you not put a stop to those violations happening under your watch?

Hon Leona Dombrowsky (Minister of the Environment): I think that it's important to correct the record that, in fact, the orders were followed up on, charges were laid, and the matter was before the court. The owner of the transfer station indicated in the court that they were in the process of removing that amount of waste that was in excess of the capacity that the certificate of

approval had allowed for. So the Ministry of the Environment had been monitoring it and was of the opinion that at least the proponent was working to become compliant.

Ms Churley: The minister allowed this illegal waste to stay there after four other fires, and you did nothing: too little, too late. You failed to act, and you caused this fire to happen as a result. The constituents of your colleague the finance minister are now paying the price for your inaction. With the cuts the finance minister has planned for your ministry, more environmental disasters are in the works, just like under the Tories. That's what happened with Walkerton.

During the campaign, the Liberals promised to protect the environment. Remember? "Choose change." But without field staff who are on the ground and ready to respond, there will be more disasters like Vaughan. Vaughan regional councillors have said that ministry staff must be available to respond in real time to prevent fires like this from recurring, but their own MPP the finance minister has ordered a further 12% cut to the MOE.

Minister, will you, as the minister responsible, stand up for your ministry and real environmental protection and demand that the Minister of Finance restore, not rescind, funding to the Ministry of the Environment?

Hon Mrs Dombrowsky: The Ministry of the Environment was prosecuting the owner of this site in the courts, and the owner of the site indicated in court records that it was in the process of cleaning up the site. When the fire occurred—and this does happen from time to time in transfer sites—the Ministry of the Environment was there with the SWAT team to ensure that there was no further garbage being brought into the site.

Today, we are requiring the proponent, the owner of that site, to provide us with its plan to show us when they will be in compliance. We are not allowing any more waste to go to that site until the proponent, the owner, can demonstrate how they are going to comply with their certificate of approval. So I would say that this government continues to be diligent to protect the environment for the people of Ontario.

MARIJUANA GROW HOUSES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Minister, today you introduced legislation announcing tough new measures against indoor marijuana grow operations. This is an extremely serious issue in my riding, along with many ridings in the province of Ontario.

As a result of profitability and relatively low penalties involved, grow ops have become a thriving provincial, illegal and dangerous, industry. Indoor, mostly residential, operations allow for year-round cultivation and better protection from law enforcement agencies and poachers in neighbourhoods.

Grow ops bring criminal activity right into neighbourhoods and raise a host of community safety issues. For

example, they bypass hydro power and use it for their sources, making it structurally impossible to deal with it after the house is sold. Floor-to-ceiling ventilation systems create a very high mould problem. Concentrated fertilizers, pesticides and chemicals are carelessly stored and often disposed of in sewers across the province.

Finally, most grow operations can be linked to organized crime. Their presence in the community can result in street crimes, home invasions and dangerous booby traps for our officials. Minister, can you indicate what legislation it is hoped will come after the work we did in opposition to try to correct this problem, which wasn't done by that party?

1450

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I thank the member from Brant for his question. I think it's important to know that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and AMO are the people that really brought this to the attention of the government. They have determined, because of their experience, that this is a major, major problem in their communities. They've asked us to do something to help them stamp out what has become an epidemic. As a result of that, as a result of the Green Tide report of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, as a result of the Green Tide Summit that we hosted, we have come forward with initiatives that will address some of these concerns. That is why this is so important. And what we are going to do is address the idea of the fact that hydro is a safety issue. There are houses that are burning down as a result of gerrymandering of the wiring. It's a matter of inspectors being able, once the police have identified a house as a grow op, to go in and make sure that the degradation of that house is corrected. We're providing legislation that will allow us to seize assets that are used in a crime—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Supplementary.

Mr Levac: Thank you very much, Minister. I know that the organizations that we were involved with when we discussed this in opposition are extremely pleased to know. We have many, many organizations in the province, including the RCMP, the OPP and all of those law enforcement officials, that have been longing for some kind of action against these grow houses. Quite frankly, our municipalities are at wits' end in terms of how to save and protect our residents that live in these areas, including the real estate agencies that have very large difficulty in repossessing and turning these homes back into viable operations.

Minister, what other things are happening within your ministry so that we can clarify once and for all that this is not just one bill for one action, but that many, many people have participated in these particular actions and also ask us quite clearly what else we can do to help put these things down and get rid of organized crime in the province of Ontario?

Hon Mr Kwinter: Again I thank the member for his question. What we have is this Green Tide action group, which is made up of people like real estate agents,

insurance brokers, bankers—the people that come in and are directly impacted by the results of these crimes. Now, there are two elements. One is criminal and the other is public safety. We are determined that we will bring forward this legislation, which will give all of those people—the law enforcement officers, the utilities, all of the other people that are impacted—the necessary tools to allow them to help stamp out what has become a scourge in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATION

Mr John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Yesterday I received a copy of this Liberal propaganda disguised as a government report. This glossy brochure is nothing but a piece of partisan literature that surely breaks—

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): Order. If you continue to use that as a prop, I will go to the next question. Would you continue with your question.

Mr Yakabuski: Minister, this partisan literature surely breaks your election promise and contravenes your own proposed Bill 25. Why would you authorize the expenditure of public funds for this self-promoting partisan publication?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Let's be fairly clear with the public. I think the public expects their government to produce information indicating where they are in terms of the accomplishments and the results of the plans that they outlined in the budget. So I view this document much as I would a speech from the throne or a budget. It is simply another document to inform the public of where their government is in terms of achieving the results that were outlined in the budget. You will not find the Premier's name in there. You will find no pictures of any cabinet minister. You will find no name of any political party. It is simply a document to bring the people of Ontario up to date as to where their government is, their plans for the future and how they will achieve their objectives. I think it's frankly a good piece of public policy to inform the public that way.

Mr Yakabuski: Minister, you can spin it any way you want and you can paint any pretty picture you want, but that's a very poor illustration of the last year of Liberal government. This is nothing but a partisan piece of promotional literature. I challenge you to find one remotely negative comment about the Liberals' first year in that document. It says nothing about a punitive health tax on working families in Ontario. It says nothing about your failure to reduce insurance rates in Ontario. It says nothing about your raise in hydro rates and it says nothing about bullying hospitals.

Minister, just come clean. Just come clean today and admit that this is a Liberal feel-good document, an abuse of taxpayers' money and yet another broken promise to the people of Ontario.

Hon Mr Phillips: The public I talk to say, "Listen, we want to know the goals that you are going to achieve,

where you stand against them and the results that we should expect in the future.” The public says to me, “I don’t want you measuring your success by how much money you spend. I want you measuring your success by what you achieve,” and that they should access the Web site to find it. I think the public expects this.

As I say, it’s like a throne speech; it’s like a budget. It is another important document produced by a government to outline the goals that they are going to achieve, the results—where we are to date—and what we should achieve over the next few years. I think that is what the public wants. They want the government to commit itself to results, to measure them, and they want to be told on an annual basis where they are. Rather than being angry and yelling, I think the government is taking the right step to lay out our plans, our results and the goals that we achieve. I think the public expects that and it’s good public policy, as I said earlier.

PUBLIC INQUIRY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A question to the Attorney General: Attorney General, as you know, there are no longer any outstanding charges in the Project Truth investigation into serious allegations of child abuse and sexual assault on children. There is no longer any excuse for this government to delay the calling of a commission of public inquiry into the allegations, the investigation and the prosecutions. Will you please stand today and tell this assembly, tell the people of Cornwall, tell those sexual assault victims, tell those persons charged—whose charges were withdrawn or stayed—that you will be announcing a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act, with all of its powers.

Hon Michael Bryant (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs, minister responsible for democratic renewal): In fact, there was a finding from the court, but we are in the appeal period right now. We are determining whether or not we are going to appeal that finding, and until that happens, we are not going to speculate about any next steps. First, we will determine whether or not we are going to continue with this, whether or not we are going to appeal. We are going to review also the decision of the Court of Appeal for Ontario, wherein the court held that they wanted that trial to proceed as quickly as possible. We’ll review that within the 30-day appeal period, and as soon as a decision is made, the member will be the first to know.

Mr Kormos: Attorney General, please. The court stayed proceedings against the accused, who have been before the court not just for months but for years, and the court found that the accused did not contribute to the delay.

You know full well what the likelihood is of a successful appeal of that decision by the trial judge. The people of Cornwall were promised by your leader, by Premier McGuinty when he was campaigning in April 2003 in the city of Cornwall, that there would be a public inquiry. Will you please stand and commit this govern-

ment today, here and now, to calling a full inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act upon the expiration of 30 days if an appeal is not launched? The Premier had no hesitation supporting Gary Guzzo’s private member’s bill calling for it. It’s your turn now to keep this government’s promise to those people, those victims.

Hon Mr Bryant: I appreciate that. I thank the member for the question. I’m very aware of these issues. I was a seatmate with John Cleary in opposition. I am in constant contact with Mr Brownell now, the MPP for that area, and we continue to be fully aware of that commitment. But you do know that until such time as we make a decision, assess the judgment and determine whether or not we are going to proceed with an appeal, it wouldn’t be appropriate to talk about whether we would do that. You know that.

Maybe the member suggests that he has already made a judgment on this. We have not. Once we make a decision with respect to the appeal, then I’ll be more than happy to let this House know and to let the member know, but we will not be rushed into making an assessment on this. We have a 30-day appeal period. We will go through the decision and proceed accordingly.

1500

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr John Milloy (Kitchener Centre): My question is to the Chair of Management Board in his capacity as the minister responsible for the Ontario Securities Commission.

Yesterday, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs presented its unanimous report to the Legislature on the securities industry in Ontario. As the minister knows, in the course of its deliberations, the committee met with industry stakeholders as well as investors, both small and large, to talk about what could be done to improve the securities environment in the province.

Now that the minister has had an opportunity to receive and review the report, can he tell the Legislature what his plans are in responding to the recommendations?

Hon Gerry Phillips (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I want to begin by thanking the committee. It was a unanimous report supported by all three parties, and I think a very good piece of work. There are 14 recommendations in the report. I have had a chance to review them over the last 24 hours, and I would say that we’re supportive of all 14 of the recommendations, perhaps with some minor variations.

I also wanted to say that I have confidence in the Ontario Securities Commission, but as with any organization, we have to constantly challenge it to get better. I believe this report provides an opportunity for improvement of the Ontario Securities Commission. So I say to the member that I plan to provide a fairly comprehensive outlook of how we’re going to deal with the 14 recommendations, within the next few weeks.

Mr Milloy: The number one recommendation from the all-party committee was the unanimous endorsement of the government's call for a single securities regulator. To quote from the report, "The standing committee heard overwhelming support for the principle of a single securities regulator, and strongly supports the concept." Indeed, the lack of a single securities regulator has been called the most pressing securities issue in Ontario and across Canada.

I'd like to ask the minister what he's doing to further the cause of finding a single securities regulator for Canada.

Hon Mr Phillips: I was pleased to see the committee's recommendation strongly supporting a common or single regulator. I think the Legislature knows, but perhaps all the public don't, that we're the only country in the world without a common regulator. It is viewed as a very significant economic issue for Ontario and for Canada.

We are very much committed to pursuing it. We're having some challenge persuading the other provinces to do it. I think many of them accept that it is inevitable but need to see the model that would make it happen. So we will continue to pursue it. My view is that the way to make it happen is to flesh out a proposal that we put forward in early June, show other provinces exactly how it could work, and they, I think, could see that their concerns could be solved.

As I say, I was pleased to see that as one of the major recommendations in the report. We will continue to work on it. My own judgment is that because it's the right thing to do, it will happen, and it will happen faster if we work hard at it. That's what we plan to do.

MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean-Carleton): My question is to the Minister of Health. Dr Rayudu Koba has been a well-respected chief of staff at the Northeast Mental Health Centre. Minister, on Wednesday, Dr Koba got up and gave a report that was highly critical of your government's delivery of mental health care services. That was on Wednesday. On Friday, Dr Koba was suspended by his board.

Is this another example of bullying and pressure tactics, or is it just another example of the environment of fear and intimidation that has reigned in the health care system on your watch?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Another coincidence.

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yes. This will be interesting to the honourable member.

Firstly, you got his name wrong. I've had the opportunity to meet this doctor, I think, four times. He's from the Sudbury community. There is no doubt whatsoever that this doctor is a passionate critic of the policy that your government took with respect to the organization of mental health services in northeastern Ontario. There's no doubt about it whatsoever.

The information that you provide about whether or not he's on the board any longer is news to me, but it comes as no surprise to me, as this gentleman has been a very, very passionate advocate of the Sudbury community regaining control over provision of mental health services that your government stripped away from them. I would say to you very clearly that this is a policy which I'm working on, that I'm reviewing very carefully, with participation from the honourable member for Sudbury and the honourable member for Nipissing, because we want to do a better job of coordinating the delivery of mental health services in northeastern Ontario.

Mr Baird: I say to the Minister of Health, Dr Koka may have been critical at times of the previous government, but he remained as chief of staff, supporting mental health services in Sudbury and northeastern Ontario. It was only after he came out against you, your government and your government's policies that the board suspended him.

You have said, in a very smug and arrogant way, that you've done nothing wrong, and that the environment of fear and intimidation that is so rampant among health care providers around the province has no basis in fact. This bullygate scandal continues to grow. I want to ask you a very clear and a very simple question: Will you support the call from the official opposition and the third party for public hearings on this environment of fear and intimidation?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think you know you're going to have a pretty good day in the House when they just start making stuff up. The fact of the matter is that in the rush to judgment, instead of picking up the phone and doing a little bit of research to find out that this gentleman didn't just begin to be a critic of the process, that he's been a long-standing critic of the decisions of your government, you attempt to confuse the subject.

At the heart of the policy matter at hand, we think that there may be some merit to the call he's making with respect to a view of the way we deliver mental health services in northeastern Ontario. This is a subject that I'm taking in hand, with consultation, alongside the honourable members for Nipissing and Sudbury. I believe that at the end of the day, a more appropriate public policy resolution may, in fact, meet with his approval.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. I want to ask you about North of Superior Programs. North of Superior Programs provides mental health services, addiction counselling and integrated services for children in communities along the north shore of Lake Superior—Nipigon, Manitouwadge, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Geraldton, Longlac and Nakina. The workers there have now been on strike for quite some time. I believe we're headed into four months. The reason they've been on strike is because they've not had a pay increase in eight

years. Management offered them 0%, and then maybe 2% and 3% in the last two years.

These workers don't want to be on the picket line. They want to be providing those mental health services for children and adults, those addiction services and integrated services for children, but it's not happening. So I want to ask you, are you prepared to do anything to help settle this labour dispute so that these communities that do not have a lot of services can have these vital services returned to them?

Hon George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think we all express similar concern with respect to the patients that are served by this important agency. This is a matter that the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North has brought to my attention previously. It is the subject of a labour disruption, and as the member would well know, there is a serious matter at hand that one should not interfere with.

But I do think it's helpful to note that, with respect to mental health, the legacy of those parties was not to fund mental health. This government, in our budget this year, made a \$25-million increase in the provision of mental health services targeted at children, the first base-funding increase for mental health agencies, as I like to say, since before Bob Rae's hair turned grey.

So I think the point of the matter here is that our government is very committed to the provision of community-based mental health service. We are concerned about this, but it is the subject of a labour disruption and therefore it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

1510

Mr Hampton: This is passing strange. When somebody at Sick Children's Hospital criticizes the government on Saturday, they lose their job on Monday. When Dr Koka, who is very respected in mental health in Sudbury, criticizes you and your ministry over mental health, he is suspended. These workers have been on strike for four months trying to gain just a fair collective agreement so that they can provide the mental health services people need, and your answer is, oh, you can't get involved. Very passing strange.

If you criticize the government, you lose your job. If you go out and try to demonstrate you're not being treated fairly, the Minister of Health can't get involved. Very strange. You criticize the government, you lose your job. If you go out and try to bargain decent services and a decent contract, oh, the government can't get involved. Maybe you can tell us, when do you get involved, Minister? Only when you're firing people or only when you're telling hospital boards, "Don't criticize us"?

Hon Mr Smitherman: I think what's very clear by the honourable member's very question is one element of consistency, and that is, no evidence or proof whatsoever of any involvement on the part of myself, my staff or my ministry in any of these situations that he so desperately tries to link.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr David Oraziotti (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Yesterday the member from Timmins-James Bay had a press conference regarding Bill 106, which seeks an amendment to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act. Mr Bisson claims this amendment will cause mill closures, layoffs and the creation of supermills. Minister, will this amendment harm northern Ontario's forestry industry?

Hon David Ramsay (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member from Sault Ste Marie for the question, to clarify obviously a misunderstanding where the member from Timmins-James Bay has got it wrong again here in the House. I know that in the last session he was puzzled by the number of lines an angler had in his boat, and I had to explain that to him in the House. In this case, he confuses what the act refers to as facility licences, and that is the sawmills, and the timber licences, which is of course the wood supply.

There's nothing in that amendment that is going to affect my ability at all, whatsoever, to issue timber licences to companies. In fact, the member knows that from the authority I have in the act, and that I've done this already in northern Ontario, which we can talk about in the supplementary. We're going to do everything we can with the authority we have in this act to make sure we have strong and prosperous communities in northern Ontario.

Mr Oraziotti: Many northern Ontarians are worried they'll find themselves out of a job because of this amendment. Northern Ontario cannot afford to lose any more jobs. Can you reassure the people of northern Ontario that this amendment will not result in job loss for those working in the lumber industry?

Hon Mr Ramsay: Again I'd like to thank the member from Sault Ste Marie, who I know is very concerned about the northern economy. I appreciate his effort to bring clarity to this question in the House today.

I think the other thing the member misunderstands—unfortunately, in his press conference in Timmins yesterday, he has really started to fearmonger among workers in our sawmills—is that he's made the workers believe that, somehow, wood supply is directly tied to communities and to mills. Of course that is not the case. The minister always has the authority to direct the wood supply to any mill he or she sees fit. The leader of the third party would certainly know that, because he knows that earlier this year I redirected some wood from the Dryden area to the Ear Falls area, working with the company and the communities to make sure we had a sustainable mill in both communities. The community signed off on that, and now we have permanent, strong jobs in those communities.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and

Correctional Services. Minister, this morning you announced new legislation to crack down on marijuana grow operations. As I said in my comments, it was yet another zero-dollar announcement for law and order in this province.

It's clear we need more police to combat grow operations, we need more police to fight gang violence, we need more police to stop Internet luring of innocent children and we need more police to battle global identity theft.

Your government has increased spending this year by over \$5.1 billion over last year's budget. Minister, exactly when are we going to see even one of the 1,000 new police officers you promised in the last provincial election?

Hon Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): I find it interesting that the member opposite uses my statement to make that statement but won't make a statement whether he supports what we're doing about marijuana growers. That's an initiative of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and it's been called for by AMO.

But to answer your question, I'm on the record—we've said it all along—that we will fulfill that 1,000-police-officer promise during our mandate. What I would suggest to you, rather than throwing that out every time there's an issue, is to deal with the issues that we're dealing with so we know where you stand. That's what I'd suggest that you do.

PETITIONS

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas many volunteer fire departments in Ontario are strengthened by the service of double-hatter firefighters who work as professional, full-time firefighters and also serve as volunteer firefighters on their free time and in their home communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association has declared their intent to ‘phase out’ these double-hatter firefighters; and

“Whereas double-hatter firefighters are being threatened by the union leadership and forced to resign as volunteer firefighters or face losing their full-time jobs and this is weakening volunteer fire departments in Ontario; and

“Whereas Waterloo-Wellington MPP Ted Arnott has introduced Bill 52, the Volunteer Firefighters Employment Protection Act, that would uphold the right to volunteer and solve this problem concerning public safety in Ontario;

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

“That the provincial government express public support for MPP Ted Arnott's Bill 52 and willingness to pass it into law or introduce similar legislation that protects the right of firefighters to volunteer in their home communities on their own free time.”

It has been signed by over 150 of my constituents, mostly from the Drayton area, and needless to say, I have affixed my signature and I'm in full support of this petition.

TTC RIGHT-OF-WAY

The Speaker (Hon Alvin Curling): The member for Parkdale—Davenport.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I appreciate that. Your memory goes back a long way. Great.

I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Ministry of the Environment. It reads as follows:

“Whereas an environmental assessment is underway on St Clair Avenue West to study potential transit improvements, including the possibility of installing a dedicated TTC right-of-way;

“Whereas the consultation process so far has been in bad faith, top-down and rushed, which has disappointed and angered the local community almost entirely, and not been up to any acceptable public standards;

“Whereas comments by the chair and the members of the Toronto Transit Commission have made it clear that there is a predetermined outcome to the EA process, regardless of the objections of the local community;

“Whereas a dedicated right-of-way would force significantly more traffic on to the local streets;

“Whereas safety must be a high priority for any alternative selected and, according to the ambulance and fire department staff, they don't like to work with right-of-ways;

“Whereas a right-of-way would lead to the reduction or elimination of on-street parking on St Clair Avenue West;

“Whereas traffic bottlenecks at certain intersections and underpasses are already terrible, and certain chronically problematic intersections and underpasses could not stand to lose any one of the existing two lanes;

“Whereas there is no guarantee that a dedicated right-of-way will improve transit service substantially, as the number of streetcars serving the street will actually be reduced;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the Minister of the Environment to order a full environmental assessment on St Clair Avenue West, one that genuinely consults and takes into consideration the views and opinions of the local community.”

Since I'm in agreement with this, I'm delighted to sign it as well.

1520

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas recreational trailers kept at parks and campgrounds in Ontario are being assessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp (MPAC) and are subject to property taxes; and

"Whereas owners of these trailers are seasonal and occasional residents who contribute to the local tourist economy without requiring significant municipal services; and

"Whereas the added burden of this taxation will make it impossible for many families of modest income to afford their holiday sites at parks and campgrounds;

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

"That these seasonal trailers should not be subject to retroactive taxation for the year 2003; and that the tax not be imposed in 2004; and that no such tax be introduced without consultation with owners of the trailers, the trailer parks, municipal governments, businesses, the tourism sector...."

I sign and support this petition on their behalf.

CHIROPRACTIC SERVICES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in support of chiropractic services in the Ontario health insurance plan that concludes:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): This petition was presented to me by the Bayview North Family Chiropractic Clinic in Richmond Hill and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage will mean that many of the 1.2 million patients who use chiropractic will no longer be able to access the health care they need;

"Whereas those with reduced ability to pay—including seniors, low-income families and the working poor—will be forced to seek care in already overburdened family physician offices and emergency departments;

"Whereas the elimination of OHIP coverage is expected to save \$93 million in expenditures on chiropractic treatment at a cost to government of over \$200 million in other health care costs; and

"Whereas there was no consultation with the public on the decision to delist chiropractic services;

"We, the undersigned"—and there are literally hundreds of signatures—"petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse the decision announced in the May 18, 2004, provincial budget and maintain OHIP

coverage for chiropractic services, in the best interests of the public, patients, the health care system, government and the province."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and hand this to the page from Oak Ridges, Gabriella Silano.

TUITION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I have a petition today to increase public funding for post-secondary education, reduce tuition fees and reinstate an upfront system of grants for Ontario students. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition freeze for two years; and

"Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

"Whereas increasing student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

"Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students' call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to (a) reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario, (b) increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average, and (c) implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for Ontario full-time and part-time students."

LANDFILL

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): These petitions come from the Caledonia Fair and are signed primarily by cattlemen in Haldimand county. It's titled,

"Halt Edwards Lake Landfill (Certificate of Disapproval).

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the planned Edwards Lake landfill on Brooks Road, Cayuga, two miles (three kilometres) east of the Grand River, is to be 15 acres (six hectares) excavated 29 feet (nine metres) deep in an area of wetland/slough forest; and

"Whereas the new Adams Mine Lake Act—as of June 17, 2004—redefines the word 'lake' and prohibits any excavation into the water table for landfill larger than 2.5 acres (1 hectare);

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

"To issue a certificate of disapproval to halt Edwards Lake landfill excavation."

I agree with the cattlemen and I affix my signature to this.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that begins:

"Whereas since Bill 99 was passed in 1997 by the Harris government, the situation for injured workers with respect to income, recognition of their injuries by the compensation system, treatment by the employer and opportunities for re-employment has dramatically deteriorated..."

It goes on to say after the whereases that:

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

"To direct the provincial government to immediately:

"Change the name of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board back to the Workers' Compensation Board;

"Implement full cost-of-living protection for injured workers;

"Establish full coverage for all workers and all work-related disabilities and diseases under the compensation system;

"Abolish experience rating which encourages employers to, and rewards them for, hiding occupational injury and illness by giving them money back from their premiums;

"Enforce health and safety in the workplace by hiring more inspectors and sending them to workplaces without giving advanced notice to the employer;

"Enforce employer re-employment obligations and abolish provisions which deem workers to be receiving wages from jobs they don't have;

"Conduct a complete review of the workers' compensation system in order to write new legislation which ensures fundamental benefits and rights for workers, including survivors of workers killed on the job, as called for in the CAW Jobs and Full Compensation platform."

I have signed this petition.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): "Whereas there are approximately 23,000 children and youth in Simcoe county and York region who have special needs; and

"Whereas approximately 6,000 of these children have multiple special needs that require a range of core rehabilitation services; and

"Whereas children with multiple special needs (and their families) throughout the province access ongoing rehabilitation services that are critical for their development at children's treatment centres in their area; and

"Whereas there is no children's treatment centre in Simcoe county or York region. For families that can travel, the closest services are in Toronto; and

"Whereas Simcoe county and York region is the only area left in the entire province that does not have access

to children's treatment centre services in their own area; and

"Whereas, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care provided funding to the Simcoe York District Health Council for implementation planning for an integrated children's rehabilitation services system in December 2001, and

"Whereas the implementation plan was submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in December 2002; and

"Whereas the proposal was reviewed and approved by the appropriate ministries in 2003 and, in August, the Ministry of Health advised the Simcoe county and York region district health council that the funding had been committed and would be available shortly;

"We the undersigned petition the Legislature of Ontario to release the funding for the children's treatment centre in Simcoe county and York region so that core rehabilitation services can be delivered to the children and youth in Simcoe county and York region."

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

ANAPHYLACTIC SHOCK

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition from NASK, the area that Mr Bradley represents, the anaphylactic organization there.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is no established province-wide standard to deal with anaphylactic shock in Ontario schools; and

"Whereas there is no specific comment regarding anaphylactic shock in the Education Act; and

"Whereas anaphylactic shock is a serious concern that can result in life-or-death situations; and

"Whereas all students in Ontario have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community; and

"Whereas all parents of anaphylactic students need to know that safety standards exist in all schools in Ontario;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the McGuinty government support the passing of Bill 3, An Act to protect anaphylactic students"—my bill—"which requires that every school principal in Ontario establish a school anaphylactic plan."

I sign my name wholeheartedly to this petition and ask for us to continue the fight.

1530

TAXATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln): I'm pleased to present a petition signed by John Bessey and others from Fort Erie, Ontario, that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government's 2004 budget could increase taxes on working families by an average of \$1,200; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he would not raise taxes by one penny on working families in Ontario;

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

“The Dalton McGuinty Liberals should cancel any plans to increase taxes and, if they still plan on raising taxes, hold a referendum according to a law that Premier McGuinty himself voted for.”

In support, my signature.

TUITION

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government took an historic step forward by funding a tuition freeze for two years; and

“Whereas a majority of Ontarians support increased public funding for colleges and universities as well as reduced tuition fees; and

“Whereas increased student debt through income-contingent loan repayment schemes or raising loan limits only increases the cost of post-secondary education for students from modest means; and

“Whereas per student investment in Ontario still lags gravely behind the vast majority of jurisdictions in North America;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, supporting the Canadian Federation of Students’ call to increase funding for colleges and universities and reduce tuition fees for all Ontario students, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: reduce tuition fees for all students in Ontario; increase public funding for post-secondary education to at least the national average; and implement an upfront, needs-based grant system for all Ontario full-time and part-time students.”

DISTRICT OF MUSKOKA

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have several thousand more petitions to keep Muskoka part of northern Ontario. It says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the district of Muskoka is currently designated as part of northern Ontario; and

“Whereas the geography and socio-economic conditions of Muskoka are very similar to the rest of northern Ontario; and

“Whereas the median family income in the district of Muskoka is \$10,000 below the provincial average and \$6,000 below the median family income for greater Sudbury; and

“Whereas removing the district of Muskoka from northern Ontario will adversely affect the hard-working people of Muskoka by restricting access to programs and incentives enjoyed by residents in northern Ontario communities; and

“Whereas the residents of Muskoka should not be confused with those who cottage or vacation in the district; and

“Whereas the federal government of Canada recognizes the district of Muskoka as part of the north; and

“Whereas this is a mean-spirited, politically motivated decision on the part of the McGuinty government;

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

“That the McGuinty government maintain the current definition of northern Ontario for the purposes of government policy and program delivery.”

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM CANCELLATION ACT, 2004

LOI DE 2004 ANNULANT LE PROGRAMME DE PERFECTIONNEMENT PROFESSIONNEL

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 16, 2004, on the motion for second reading of Bill 82, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 to cancel the Professional Learning Program / Projet de loi 82, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1996 sur l’Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l’Ontario en vue d’annuler le programme de perfectionnement professionnel.

Ms Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I’m very happy to rise in support of Bill 82 today. What this bill, the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act—or, as I like to call it, the Declaring a Truce with Teachers Act—is about is removing an ineffective irritant that created a poisoned atmosphere in the education system, and paving the way for the development of a plan that will actually work, because the most ridiculous thing about the PLP was that it wasn’t working. Teachers weren’t signing up, because it wasn’t working.

I want to just talk a little bit about my own experience. My first child started school in 1984, and my third child graduated in 2002. So between 1984 and 2002 I had an opportunity, as a parent and as an activist and as a school trustee, to watch what was happening in the school system. I can tell you that, after 1995 and into the reign of the previous government, what started to happen in public education was an atmosphere of toxicity and real hostility.

One of my concerns is that young parents putting their children in public school today, or certainly before we were elected last year, may have gotten a sense that that was the norm, that the hostility between teachers and government was the norm. In fact, that should not be the case, and what we’re trying to do with Bill 82 is move toward a period of peace and stability with teachers.

This piece of legislation is important in that it signals a willingness on the part of this government to work with teachers rather than to score points at their expense, and to work in the interests of students. Minister Kennedy

encapsulated it when he addressed the House on May 13. He said, "Our policy is one of respect for teachers as professionals, individuals who conduct themselves in a manner that deserves the public trust. Every Ontario student needs and deserves highly trained and highly motivated people at the front of their classes."

We completely understand that teachers need opportunities for professional development. What the learning program that was put in place by the previous government assumed was that teachers weren't responsible. It assumed that teachers would not engage in professional development. It assumed that teachers were not capable of designing their own plans and taking those courses that they needed. We reject those assumptions. We know that teachers are capable of doing that. We know that teachers can work with us to create a better plan.

This approach of respect comes out of the knowledge that thousands of teachers expressed their concerns with the professional learning program. This change also shows a willingness to listen to teachers' concerns and to work with them to achieve the best results for Ontario's students. As I said, from my perspective as a school trustee, what I saw was an unhappy workforce—increasingly unhappy as teachers struggled to deal with this punitive plan that was imposed upon them. We know that the mood, the environment in the classroom that's created by the demeanour of the teacher, is incredibly important to the learning environment of students, and that students will do better if teachers feel that they are in an environment that supports them. What we're trying to do is create that environment.

Mr Speaker, just before I conclude, I want to say I'm going to share my time with Mr Qaadri, the member from Etobicoke North, but I want to make a couple of more points before he takes over.

As part of this change, on June 19 Minister Kennedy released to the education partnership table a discussion paper on teacher excellence. That discussion paper talks about a number of initiatives that might replace the professional learning program, because what we've said is, "This isn't working and we need to look at some other options for what might work." These are the things that are being discussed with the teachers, with administrators, with the education sector. We're looking at mentoring programs for new teachers. We're looking at the possibility of an induction year, professional development days and enhanced summer programs. In fact, this past summer more than 7,500 teachers signed up and went back to school for training and reading and math instruction, to be able to serve as teachers for literacy and numeracy this fall.

The proof is in the pudding that there are many, many ways to work with the sector, to come up with a better plan that will work, so that our young teachers don't leave, because that's the other thing that's happening: Young teachers are leaving the profession. We can't afford to have that happen. So I am very happy to support this legislation. It paves the way for a very much improved era in public education in Ontario.

Mr Shafiq Qaadri (Etobicoke North): It's a privilege to speak in support of this particular piece of legislation, the Professional Learning Program Cancellation Act. I'd like to follow in the footsteps set by my colleague, the MPP from Don Valley West, as she renamed this particular act. I would like to designate it the Harmony with Teachers Act.

I'm reminded of a famous book, subsequently made into a movie, about a very important teacher, a teacher who had a lasting influence on the lives of the young girls who were entrusted to her. The movie, you'll recall, was *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. There was a famous saying in that particular movie. She said to her students on the first day, "I am putting new heads on your young shoulders, and all my pupils will be the *crème de la crème*."

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I think that aspiration is what we in the government of Ontario would like to empower and equip our educational system with. We on the government side—unlike, for example, the MPP from Oak Ridges, as he clearly demonstrated in his most recent leadership bid—believe that education in Ontario is a great moral enterprise, not to be made a profit centre. We would like to foster both partnership and harmony in the educational sector, not, for example, I'll remind this House and the people of Ontario, the idea of creating a crisis, which is what a previous Minister of Education in the former government did. We are striving to create an atmosphere, a work environment, fostering excellence and professional development.

Precisely what are we referring to in this particular act? First of all, it's the result of broad consultation with the educational communities. They themselves have called the former piece of legislation "hugely flawed" and a "punitive approach," a punishment from the former government. I think it's well known that the educational sector, amongst others, was targeted by the previous government. The premise was always one of threat. For example, in this particular piece of legislation, teachers are told they will have to take a number of courses over a given period of time; otherwise, their licensing body will be instructed by the government to remove their teaching privileges and their certification. This is an enforced rule which actually overrode the college of teachers' own recommendation. As my colleague has mentioned, this particular program has had minimal enrolment, minimal success and minimal impact and uptake. To boot, the entire program is nevertheless still paid for by the teachers themselves.

As you'll recall, the teachers of Ontario greeted a then-Minister of Education with tomatoes at a particular event. Perhaps they were speaking and maybe demonstrating on behalf of a lot of people in Ontario who believe that public education is a moral trust and deserves our best efforts and best practices. As a case in point, 48 work stoppages—strikes, if you will—were organized across Ontario under the previous regime in the eight years of the Harris-Eves government. It led to the discouragement of an entire profession.

In its place, we in this government are going to be bringing back harmonized, continuous learning—as my colleague has mentioned, mentoring programs, professional development days, and summer programs as well.

To return to that quotation about putting new heads on young shoulders and all the pupils will become the *crème de la crème*, we in this government want to work with the educational communities to empower, encourage and equip our teachers to accomplish just that goal.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to stand up to say that I'm going to be doing my lead this afternoon, for those who might be watching and are interested in what the New Democrats have to say. I will be commenting on what the Liberal members who have previously spoken have had to say. I've got to say, I agree with pretty well much of what they say and will have more to say on that, and things they haven't spoken about. I will establish a connection between what they are doing and what they ought to be doing in other areas.

Again, simply to argue that in a little while, after the Tories speak, Marchese's on to do his lead, and I just want to inform people of that.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Lots of time.

Mr Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): It's a pleasure to rise today and join the members from Don Valley West and Etobicoke North. I really did appreciate their comments on Bill 82.

This bill, if passed as proposed, I think will go a long way to mending the awful shape we found ourselves in with the relationship between the provincial government—the Minister of Education—and the professional teachers in this province. During the last election, it was one of the major issues. It was something people asked us to address because they know how important schools are, not only to their own community but to the future of the students, their own education and to the economy of our province as it moves ahead.

There has been a lot of turmoil under the previous government. It's time to put all that behind us. This bill, I believe, goes a long way toward doing that. If you look at the turmoil they've experienced, what we would like to see is some peace and stability in the system so we can start to implement some of the proposals we plan to implement to improve public education in this province.

When you look at some of the things that were done during the term of the previous government, it doesn't surprise you that things need to be fixed. Private school funding was increased by \$3,500 per student, while for those children who were in public education, funding was decreased by almost \$1,300 per student.

Not any of the tests has achieved the desired results. If you look at the results—grade 3, grade 6, grade 9—there is simply no improvement there to speak of. When you consider the amount of money that was spent—previous governments spent almost \$400 million of taxpayers' dollars—to fire teachers and other employment workers,

this goes a long way to restoring the type of relationship that should exist between the provincial government and those people who teach our children.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise to take part in the debate on Bill 82 and comment on the speeches from the members from Etobicoke North and Don Valley West. It is my pleasure to be here today.

I had an opportunity in the previous government to sit for about 18 months as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. I can tell you that it was really, truly, a very enjoyable time in my time here at Queen's Park, because I was able to visit schools from across the province and get to talk to a lot of teachers, parents, school councils and children, who are the future of our province.

In my time, I was always inspired by the spirit in the classroom and the spirit in the schools. The only time I heard a lot of negative things about teaching and about the teachers' relationship with government was in this particular place right here, where this government continually hammered away at everything we had done, as the previous government. That's how, of course, they gained a lot of support. They went out to all the teachers' federations, and most of them supported the government in the last election. Now they owe a lot back. They owe a lot back for the hard work the teachers did in all the election campaigns, and a lot of that involves funding of education.

I know that in my riding they promised over a \$1,000 increase per student for both school boards. They brought out this chart during the election campaign that said, "We need \$1,000 more to compete with other school boards in the province." I'm looking forward to that. I'm looking forward to Mr Kennedy and Mr Sorbara coming forward with that type of funding increase. Apparently it was justified somehow. We always thought the funding formula was fair, but Mr Kennedy thought it was wrong. We look forward to the two Simcoe county school boards receiving up to a \$1,000 increase in funding in this term in government.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I'd like to take this opportunity in a short time just to explain that I was the victim of one of these silly PLP plans. Just after I was elected, and still a member of my board, I got a letter from this organization that said I had two months to complete a PLP plan, all the 14 courses. The ridiculousness of this whole plan and how it applied not only insulted me as a professional, but it insulted me in terms of the way it was applied across the province. I had to apply for a six-week extension in order to apply for a further extension so that I could fulfill this PLP while I was the MPP for Brant.

Having said that, I could tell you a story as long as my arm about this type of professional development this government foisted on the teachers of Ontario. The characterization of the member across there is just laughable, to say that his best friend is a teacher and all this kind of stuff. It's just mumbo-jumbo. That government did nothing but destroy a profession psychologically, spiritually and any other way you can say it. They took joy in

the fact that they took on the teachers and basically brought them to heel. That is gone.

We're no longer going to deal with that. We're going to deal with teachers as professionals, and we're going to deal with teachers in terms of our knowledge that they are extremely professional people. They learn on a regular, daily basis. They spend personal time educating themselves to do a better job in the classroom. Thank God they're that professional that they were able to survive those years when that government applied their pressures and their draconian way of trying to improve a profession. It's amazing to think that that government would sit there and beat teachers so badly and then turn around and say, "But we want you to do a good job with those students." It doesn't make sense to me. Thank God we've got a profession that knows how to live well beyond what they did to them over the last eight years.

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The Deputy Speaker: The member for Don Valley West has two minutes to reply.

Ms Wynne: I thank the members for Trinity-Spadina, Oakville, Simcoe North and Brant for their comments.

I want to follow up on something that the member for Simcoe North said and just comment that we as a government, we as a Legislature, owe a lot to the students of this province. We owe a lot to the public of this province. That's exactly true. That's because they're depending on us. They're depending on us to deliver public education, because without a solid public education system our democracy doesn't flourish and our economy doesn't flourish. We exist, we're here, in order to support those things.

I think the move in this bill acknowledges that already 85% of teachers in this province engage in professional development anyway. That's what was so ludicrous about the PLP, that it was solving a problem that didn't exist. In doing so, it created a problem. What we're trying to do is unravel that nonsense and work with the sector so that we can put in place a plan that actually will work, that will help people to stay in the profession, because it will establish an environment of respect and we won't lose young teachers. More importantly, we'll attract to education the teachers that we need. We need the smartest, best people in this province. We've got really excellent teachers in the classroom. We need to attract more of those people, and we need to keep them in the system. That's what this bill is about.

My colleague from Trinity-Spadina, I'm not surprised that he's supportive of this bill. I've heard him speak many, many times in support of public education, and I hope that indicates that he and his caucus will be supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in this debate. Obviously, we have somewhat of a different view of this legislation than members of the government. Over the next few minutes, I'll attempt to set the record straight, first of all, about what the result of

this legislation will be and what, in fact, was in place previously.

It's interesting, when I look at this bill—and I'm sure you've read it, Speaker—there is not a whole lot to this bill; basically three pages. But what is interesting, as I read through this bill, is that the explanatory note, in one sense, really tells it all. It reads as follows:

"The bill repeals part III.1 of the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 which provides for a professional learning committee and sets out professional learning requirements for members of the college. The bill also makes complementary amendments to other provisions of the act."

Here's what's very interesting: This bill does, in fact, do precisely what the objective indicated here is; that is, it repeals the provisions for a professional learning committee and those aspects that set out professional learning requirements for teachers in this province.

When you read through the actual legislation—I have never seen the word "repeal" more often than in this piece of legislation. One would have thought that, if anything, what this government would do—if in fact they want to come alongside teachers and help them to become the best they can possibly be, to improve their professional qualifications and to ensure that we have the most qualified people in our classrooms—with all of its professing of wanting to support education in the province, wanting to support teachers, would be to have a positive piece of legislation that says, "Here's what we will do."

Instead, it refers in the first paragraph to a number of provisions of the previous act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, and it will be repealed. "Paragraph 6 of subsection 3(1)" etc "is amended by striking out 'including professional learning required to maintain certificates of qualification and registration.'" Section 3: "Schedule B, section 3, is amended by striking out"—and it goes on and on.

Every single paragraph of this bill is not talking about positive things that this government is prepared to do to support teachers in our classrooms but rather takes away something that was intended to support teachers and their professionalism within our classrooms.

No one believes more strongly than I do that the teaching profession is probably the highest calling of any profession within our society. Teachers spend, in many cases, unfortunately, almost more time with children than their parents do, certainly their waking hours, in terms of their formative years and establishing foundations they will then use that we all have relied on to build our careers.

What is important is that teachers are given the appropriate tools and resources so they can in fact become the best they can possibly be. That was the objective of this bill that is now being dismantled. I believe that this government will live not long—about three years, I predict—but over that short period of time I believe that they too will come to regret this day, this bill, the actions they're taking to unwind the professional support network and a

system of professional improvement that this bill provided.

We responded to the call from across this province—from educators, from parents, from those who understood the importance of ensuring that we have the best possible teachers in our classrooms. That's why we brought into this Legislature the Ontario College of Teachers Act in 1996. We brought it forward to this Legislature for the purpose of ensuring that there was a formal structure within this province so that teachers could access ongoing education and so that we could bring excellence into the classroom.

I don't believe there's anyone in this Legislature who would disagree that it is important that teachers have every opportunity to improve their knowledge, that they be given the most up-to-date information in terms of what will allow them to better meet the needs of classrooms. The Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, requires all members of the Ontario College of Teachers to complete 14 approved credit courses—seven core and seven elective. That is structured over a five-year period of time. It was structured in such a way that, yes, it was mandatory. Those initiatives of ongoing education would be an absolute requirement by our teaching profession in order to maintain their teaching certificate. Speaker, I don't know about you, but there are not any professions I know of that don't require ongoing mandatory updating and ongoing learning.

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Interjection.

Mr Klees: There's a member here who quips behind me, who is a medical doctor. I can tell you, if medical doctors in our province didn't require some ongoing professional updating, I would hesitate to recommend to anyone to walk into his office. But I know he does that and he's a strong proponent of ongoing professional development for the medical profession. Why would we deny the teaching profession in our province those same important professional standards? That's what the bill this government is now unravelling intends to do.

The categories of core areas for this ongoing instruction were curriculum knowledge, student assessment, special education, teaching strategies, classroom management, leadership, use of technology, and communication with parents and students. These are all vital elements to a successful teaching career, and I believe that every teacher in this province who is truly committed to his or her profession understands as well the importance of this kind of ongoing professional development.

Members refer to the fact that we somehow have failed in the implementation of this program, but it was intentionally put forward in such a way that it would be, in fact, overseen by the profession itself in a self-regulatory way, and that it would be supportive. We knew from the very beginning the only way this program would be successful was if, in fact, teachers participated in it.

I hear from the previous member, who said, "It really didn't work. It didn't work because teachers didn't enrol

in it." I hate to say, but I think it's important for the record to say, that the reason teachers did not enrol in this program is that we have evidence they were instructed not to. They were instructed by their union leaders not to participate in this program because there was some self-fulfilling prophecy at play here, that they were going to determine this would not achieve its objective. That's highly unfortunate, because I believe it's parents who would be, and were extremely supportive of this initiative. Students would benefit from it, and teachers, of course, would benefit as well.

The college committee, the professional learning committee, approved the courses and provided the professional learning. Each course in the professional learning program has an assessment component to verify the knowledge and skills a teacher is required to have. The Ontario College of Teachers and its subcommittee, the professional learning committee, both have significant numbers of teachers in their makeup.

With regard to the issue of the makeup of the Ontario College of Teachers, I want to speak to that just briefly. I believe it's extremely important that there is a very objective assessment of the qualifications of our professionals in the teaching profession. To say that this body is not self-governing and professional in nature is not to understand or respect the real purpose of the Ontario College of Teachers. That purpose is to serve the public interest, and not the teachers' interest, not the boards' interest, and certainly not the government's interest.

Bill 82 highlights that this government shows no consideration for any of the education stakeholders' interests, I venture to say. Bill 82 removes all formal and accountable tracking of a teacher's professional development. If a teacher so chooses, he or she won't be obligated to keep his or her skills updated. That was a large part of the original intent of the bill we had introduced in this House, that not only would there be requirements for the ongoing education and very prescribed curriculum, but there would also be, then, the mandatory tracking of that progress.

I heard previous members refer to their title that they would ascribe to this bill. I have my own, and what I see this as is really the act that could be entitled the Selling Out to Union Bosses Act by this government. That's how I see it.

We know, in the previous campaign, the election campaign we were involved in, the number of times we heard the then leader of the Liberal Party—now the Premier thanks in large part, and I don't think there's a teacher I've spoken to who doesn't support this, to the teachers, who played a major role in the election of this government.

Over the next few months and years, I believe what's going to happen is that those same teachers who put their trust in this Premier and in this political party are going to regret the day they ever did that, because as with other promises that were made, teachers are going to understand that promises to them too will be broken, and it won't be long.

This is one, quite frankly, that this Premier has kept. He promised to dismantle the important legislation we have here. He made that commitment. I have no doubt it was a quid pro quo: "I will eliminate teacher testing if you support me in this election." That was a deal that was made, and for this he is no doubt being applauded by some.

What happens beyond that, we have yet to see. I'd like to speak to the importance of quality of education. Our students will only be competitive when they graduate from our education system if in fact their educational standards are competitive, not within Ontario but within Canada and internationally. That's all about standards. We can have curriculum standards, but I've said many times that if we do not have a qualified front-line teaching profession who are, in turn, the best qualified of anywhere, then our students won't have the level of excellence in education we want them to have.

So for that reason, I remind members of the Legislature that this was the reason we introduced this important step, for the province of Ontario to have mandatory teacher testing, not from the standpoint of holding them accountable, but from the standpoint of putting in place a structure within which all of these supporting tools could be provided, all of these elements of training and support and the tools we know our teachers need to become the best could be managed and improved on, and to help our teachers achieve the professional level they were attempting to achieve. What we have here, in one fell swoop in three pages of this legislation, is the erosion of that.

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I want to address as well the issue of the College of Teachers. This all goes to whether or not standards in education in this province will be set according to what is right academically or what is simply driven through a skewed process. The Minister of Education—I'm reading here from a magazine that I know you read probably monthly, professionally speaking. The Minister of Education was speaking to the College of Teachers, and he said, "The college though—I want to be very clear—exists for one reason.... It's not for teacher interest. It can't be. It is a delegation of authority and responsibility from the government for the public interest. Only a select number of professions are capable of sustaining that." In that, I agree with him.

Then he goes on to talk about how he would go about appointing members to the college, this important body that oversees professional standards of the industry, and he makes the point throughout this interview that the college should not be a place where partisan politics are played out. He says, "We are not going to pick partisans that support the government of the day. Nor are we picking people that represent discernibly any kind of caucus. There will be people who care about education, who are supportive of teachers and who understand the public interest when it comes to making sure that teachers are regulated fairly."

Who can argue with that? I know, Speaker, that you wouldn't. But this comes from a government that, on the

one hand, purports to be lily-white in terms of this education portfolio. This comes from a minister who didn't have to but who made a point of going on record as saying, "We will not appoint people to the College of Teachers who are partisan in any way."

Interestingly enough, I think this was actually the first appointment he made, and I refer you to the standing committee on government agencies, September 29. This was an individual who was going through the hearing process for appointment to the College of Teachers. Her name is Anne-Marie Levesque. On page A-206, Mr Tascona, who's doing the interview, says to Ms Levesque, "Have you ever donated to the Liberal Party?" The response from Ms Levesque was, "Yes, I have."

"Mr Tascona: The provincial Liberal Party?"

"Ms Levesque: Yes."

"Mr Tascona: Are you a member of the provincial Liberal Party?"

"Ms Levesque: Yes, I am. I can tell you that, even when I was in Alberta, I was a member of the Liberal Party and I cheered for the Montreal Alouettes and I cheered for the Montreal Canadiens."

I'm not sure what that has to do with appointment to the college.

Mr Tascona goes on to ask how she came to know about this.

She makes it very clear that she got to know about it from her MPP, who happens to be a Liberal. So much for the non-partisanship of the appointment to the College of Teachers.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): We're not prejudiced. We can appoint Liberals too.

Mr Klees: Now all of a sudden the members are waking up and realizing—

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): That's what we're doing. Right on.

Mr Klees: Well, here's the point: Very simply, this act that we have before us here today is politically driven. It is driven from a partisan position. It was a commitment and a payoff for promises that were made to the teachers' unions during the election campaign, and now this government is compromising quality education in the classroom for political and partisan gain. That is what this is all about, and this government will live to regret that. It's a waste of time, expertise and money that has now just started to gain some momentum. The organization has been put in place province-wide. Teachers had the opportunity to gain from this opportunity of professional development, and now, with one three-page piece of legislation, this government is prepared to unravel all of that. The hundreds of thousands of dollars that have gone into building this structure are now being wasted by this government for no reason.

Parents across Ontario made it very clear that they don't support this initiative of this government. Do we want peace in education? Do we want motivated front-line teachers? Of course we do. We want to do everything possible to ensure that our teachers have the necessary tools and are equipped to be the best teachers

anywhere—internationally—for the benefit of our students. But this is not the way to do it.

I want to make another point on the issue of quality education. Not only is it important that our teachers are highly trained and have the best in technology and the best support in the classrooms; it is also important that they have the support of the government for doing their work. Support doesn't mean that you sell out. It doesn't mean that every time a union comes to you and says, "This is what we want," you simply hand it over. We have a responsibility as government to do what is in the public interest, not what is in the self-interest of any individual person or profession or union.

Interjections.

Mr Klees: Once again, I hear the carping from the opposite side. I hear the carping from the government members. We're touching a nerve here. The nerve we're touching is that they know they sold out on this. As parents, every one of you members knows that it's important that the teachers who are teaching your children have the best education and the best qualifications, and they will not have it if you don't provide the appropriate structure for them to have that. We had it in place. This legislation is now unravelling all that, and I believe that parents will react. They will let you know, in no uncertain terms, that they don't appreciate your selling out the quality of education in this province by taking away the one structure, which had been put in place after many years, that would ensure that our teachers have the kind of professional support they so much deserve.

I want to mention as well, Speaker, that I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Durham. I didn't mention that before, but I'm going to do that now. I know, particularly with his background in education, that he has a great deal that he wants to add to this debate, and he will.

I want to talk about class size for a minute. An important cornerstone of education reform for the self-appointed education Premier, as Dalton McGuinty would refer to himself, was the capping of class sizes. You'll remember that promise, Speaker: an absolute hard cap of 20 children per class from junior kindergarten to grade 3. It's very interesting that the Premier and the Minister of Education, in the first week of September, called a press conference—a great photo op—to announce that some 1,300 schools across the province had achieved some form of that lower class size. Here's what is interesting about that, and it goes to the heart of how this government does business: It's all about show; it's all about photo ops.

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The Premier and the Minister of Education know full well that the final enrolment figures don't come in to the Ministry of Education and aren't established until October; in fact, it's the end of October. So the numbers they were broadcasting in the first week of September are not real numbers at all. But they also took the time to print those numbers and to boast of their achievement in this most recent document that they put out, at a cost of

literally thousands of dollars, to represent—I should say "misrepresent," if I can say that with your permission, Speaker—to misrepresent what they have done in education, and that is to achieve lower class sizes. Had they waited until the final enrolment figures were in at the end of October, they would never have been able to make that claim, because we're getting calls now and I'm getting calls every day from parents across this province and schools in every region of our province that kindergarten, junior kindergarten, grade 1 and grade 2 have 28 kids, 31 kids. That doesn't sound like a hard cap of 20 to me. Does that sound like a hard cap to you? No. And it isn't.

Mr Marchese: No. What's going on?

Mr Klees: I'll tell you what's going on. This Minister of Education, this Premier, the so-called education Premier, is playing fast and loose with political spin so that they can somehow pretend that they are meeting those objectives. They're not. But here's my point on the issue of class sizes: They are supporting, with multi-millions of new dollars, this hard cap policy that they say is going to lead to higher quality education in the classrooms. I believe that every parent in this province will agree with us when we say that much more important than whether there are three or four more children in a class is the qualification and the motivation and the excellence of the teaching that takes place in that class. That's why we believe very strongly—

Interjection.

Mr Klees: I'm not going to be supporting this legislation, if you've drawn that conclusion. And the reason for that is that I don't believe this is in the public interest. I do not believe it's in the interests of the teaching profession or the parents or the children. I believe that this government, having sold out to the teachers' unions in the course of their election campaign, is now, unfortunately, willing to compromise the quality of education and is taking away the tools and the support system that we had put in place for the teaching profession in this province. That, I believe, this government will live to regret.

As I said before, they have three years left. At the end of that time, the commitment we will make is that we will work with the teaching profession to ensure that there is in place in this province a system—a professional, ongoing education for teachers—that will be a mandatory requirement and that will serve not only the teaching profession well but also parents and students well.

I believe that what this government should be doing is looking very carefully at what is undermining the quality of teaching in this province. What it is, I say to the member opposite, is a circumstance that I have referred to often as the Achilles heel of education in this province. This government does not have the courage to do anything about that, and that has to do with how teachers in our province negotiate their contracts. What I believe is important is that we avoid what should never again happen in this province: that students miss out on one day of teaching in their classrooms because of a teachers' strike.

Teachers, professionals in this province, should not have to strike. It's time that we move beyond this industrial model of resolving contract disputes in the teaching profession to a professional system of arbitration, no different from what nurses and doctors and firefighters and police officers have. I believe the very essential service that our teachers are providing in our classrooms across this province should be recognized with the same degree of professionalism as those other services. Whether it be a police service, a firefighting service or a service that is being provided by our doctors or nurses, the teachers of our province should be put on the same professional level so that that same process should be followed for the teaching profession.

Out of respect for the teaching profession, I call on this government to have the courage to put in place that kind of contract resolution. You know why they won't do it? They won't do it for the same reason that they've introduced this piece of legislation today: because they've sold out to the teachers' unions—not the front-line teachers. I can tell you, every front-line teacher whom I have spoken to about the issue of teachers' strikes tells me they don't want to strike. They would much rather have a system that the doctors and nurses have and that police officers and firefighters have. They don't want to go out on a sidewalk with a picket.

So I call on this government to take that step. That's a piece of legislation that they should bring here to the House. And I'll tell you what: I'll support it, because that's doing the right thing not only for teachers; that's doing the right thing for students and for parents. In the final analysis, that is what it will take, I believe, to truly move our teaching profession forward and to build the kind of respect and, as the previous speaker to this bill indicated, bring peace to education. Here's what I will predict: Given the kind of settlement this government has offered to medical doctors, and given what we know about what's been set aside for teachers in this province—namely, 2% and 2% and 2%—there isn't a teachers' union that's going to agree to a 2% settlement.

You folks are on your way to a great deal of difficulty in the teaching profession. You're on your way to teachers' strikes right across this province, and then we want to talk about quality of education. You are not going to be able to keep your promises to the teachers' unions, and you should not have kept it with this piece of legislation that is dismantling professional development for teachers in this province. This is precisely the kind of compromise and the kind of selling out to the teachers' unions that this Premier will regret.

With that, I defer to my colleague from Durham. Thank you.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Continuing the debate on Bill 82, I recognize the member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a real pleasure to follow someone of the stature of the member for Oak Ridges, whom I have the greatest respect for. I commend

him for his representation of core values when it came to his leadership campaign. I think he impressed many people throughout the province, many of whom are in my riding.

He now serves as the education critic in the John Tory party. I can tell you there was considerable reflection by our leader, John Tory, in the placement of the critics. Education, as the member for Oak Ridges has clearly pointed out, is stated to be one of the cornerstone promises of the Dalton McGuinty government: the recovery of this system which is so important to all of us. Public education is very critical. It's a cornerstone to each one of us.

As usual, I would like to start by saying how it affects John O'Toole and his constituents in the riding of Durham. It affects me very personally. I can hardly think of the educational experience without thinking how it affects me to this extent, Mr Speaker—and I know your wife is a teacher of some respect; I've met her and just can tell by her demeanour with your own children.

I think, first of all, parents are the primary educators. I firmly believe that. They, as the primary educators, need support. Some have coined the phrase, "It takes a community to raise a child," and it does. We entrust our children to their grandparents, to their aunts and uncles, to other significant adults, trustworthy adults. I start to move into the educational forum with regulated daycare. In some cases, that suits individuals' needs, but more importantly the introduction to education and the formation of a child's learning experience is professionally handled by a teacher. This is a trust relationship that's very impressive.

My wife is a junior kindergarten teacher at the moment. She has taught other grades, but she loves children. Being a parent of five children, my wife as a partner, we have successfully to this point in time—one never knows, but our youngest is 25 and our oldest is over 30, so that will give you some idea of the reference of which I speak. Each of them in their own respect is successful. They're successful because of that partnership with those trusting others in our lives, many of whom were teachers who gave them a new vision of their future, their hope, their opportunities, who encouraged them, who led them and who helped them to achieve their best personal potential.

I think of teachers as trusted professionals, much like a family doctor. I really do. We go into a doctor's office and we put our whole lives and personal frustrations and experience before them, sometimes not knowing them as well as we would know a teacher or other trusted friend.

I can hardly think of teachers without thinking of my older sister Catherine, who was a special education teacher, a coordinator in that area and who taught curriculum at Queen's on special education, and speech and language. After her retirement a few years ago, she did private consultations in that area. She's a gifted professional. She continued to take teaching courses all through her some 20-plus years of professional training as a teacher. She took courses all the time. I think what needs to be established is that's really what this is about.

There will be those who will natter on the other side of the House, the government now. There were relationship issues that were developed when we were government. Those may not be the right strategies to work out change in the workplace with professionals. You see that going on with Mr Smitherman today, with the doctors and the OMA agreement and firing certain individuals or at least being involved in provoking that work environment. And it will become quite controversial. The more he pressures professional groups, whether they are architects—your new regulations requiring architects to pursue certain updates is now an issue that many of you should be aware of. It's a technical area, a professional area, and the professional certification is now mandating that they take new updates on the building code. But I digress.

Bill 82 in its entirety is—I would only say in the very limited time I have, because normally I have up to an hour, but Mr Klees only left me about 25 minutes, which is surprising. For those viewing, Bill 82, which I took the time to read and reflect on the amendments it's making, is three pages. But it is half in French, so it is really one page. It really is one page. I think the best way to help the viewer and those who are not familiar with the bill—and many of the backbenchers are nodding that they have not read it. The bill repeals one part: “The bill repeals part III.1 of the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 which provides for a professional learning committee and sets out professional learning requirements for members of the college....”—all professions.

Those of you with a business background would know that a profession, by definition, is self-regulating, and professions in public sector areas primarily have a college that is the regulator, if you will, of the professional accreditation system, the licensing etc. That college system—I must commend the NDP on their history, because I'm looking forward to Mr Marchese's remarks later—has been somewhat suspect or weakened over the many years. In fact, the Royal Commission on Learning, for those who have an interest in the area, made a very strong recommendation that the college and the governance of the profession of teaching should not be dominated by the profession in case there was collusion or a conflict of interest between a person who was a member of a union—not that that's bad; that's a professional and an absolutely essential element. The Minister of Labour is shaking his head while he reads his purple paper on the next legislative amendment or cabinet document. But I don't think they should dominate the college that is to deal with the enforcement.

I'm going to make it clear to persons—many here have been teachers. In my case, I was a trustee for a number of years and did work in labour relations for some time as well. My undergraduate specialist was in labour relations, labour economics. That conflict perception, real or perceived, was the issue. Under the Royal Commission on Learning it got a lot of time. What it said was that the college should not be dominated by the union. It said that disciplinary functions of the college should be separate from the union. That's the issue, and

those who are refusing to look at the professionalization of teachers, which I support, don't realize the undue influence of the union.

I could draw to your attention, if you read the magazine *Professionally Speaking*, written for and about teachers, that there was an absolute lobby by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, the women teachers' federation and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, who were actually advertising reprisals for any teacher who took the course, which we called PLP, the professional learning program. That's what this is about in Bill 82: PLP, the professional learning program. It was saying that as a professional—this is a little bit of a controversy too—you were required to take, I believe, 14 credits. I have to go through the bill. I think it was 14 credits over a period of time that they had to take. Now, were those credits full-year credits? No. In fact, many of them were Internet credits you could do, Qs and As, on-line in an hour. Many of them were being delivered in the classroom, on professional development days, by educators. All of them were educators.

1640

So let's be clear that we've established that not just my sister Catherine, my wife, Peggy, nor other members of my family, including my daughter, who's a secondary school teacher, are opposed to it. But the union said no. Why? Because they wanted to take out Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. I understand that that's politics, that's the way it works. Good, bad, indifferent, you're government; you made the commitment. They bought you out. You will owe them. In fact, if you want to go back—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Bradley is yacking over there, but he was in government when David Peterson and Sean Conway tried to settle the teacher pension issue. They took him out. If you look to the records, and Mr Bradley, you could attest, they took you out on the teacher pension issue. They—

The Acting Speaker: Will the member take his seat. I would just like to remind the member to refer to other members of the House by their riding names, please. Thank you.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, I will do that. I'll uncover our little legend here that tells me who the members are, which I would need. I have used a bit of time responding to that, Mr Speaker. I wonder if the clock could be set back because I have a number of things to establish here.

I'm not trying to be argumentative or belligerent about it. They are a very well organized, professional union or association. There are articles in *Professionally Speaking* and other publications, which I will produce if challenged, which I save, about punitive actions if teachers took the courses. Now, many of the teachers took the courses. They just didn't register, so they'd be in compliance with the union wish. In fact, I have it on good standing because one of my younger children was in teachers' college. The teachers doing their practicum—these are new, training teachers—were being told not to take the courses. Can you imagine a profession being so

regressive in their thinking, trying to deny the professional development that teachers want and do take? The 14 credits weren't going to take 14 years; in fact, they could all be achieved quite normally.

Teachers today do work hard, and I have my own personal experience. I believe that the union itself was being regressive, in terms of trying to allow the professionals—especially the new, young teachers who wanted to become administrators or department heads or who wanted to take their specialists', who were being penalized if they tried to improve their professional performance. That's sad. If you did it to a doctor, there'd be outrage; if you did it to a lawyer, you'd be outraged; if you did it to a pharmacist—the college of pharmacy or dentistry or nursing regulates them in the professional due diligence activities and the disciplinary functions thereof. They have unions. The Ontario Medical Association is basically a professional doctors' union. It does the negotiating and that's appropriate, and I'm not denigrating that, nor do I the unions. The unions should have their business, which is workplace issues and remuneration issues; grids and structures and contracts and those kinds of things are very appropriate. But to think that they were being regressive and were repelling or pushing down the professional needs of teachers was just unthinkable and would be unacceptable in any other profession.

By and large, I could remember when Earl Manners and John Snobelen were just like two skunks in a laneway, bad-tempered leaders in both respects. Possibly as government we were part of a problem, but it did a disservice to the profession. In fact, Bill 82 is your payday for the teacher union bosses—not the individual teachers I'm speaking of who are in need of an inspiration and to be recognized and complimented for the professional due diligence and challenges they face with all the special circumstances with children today, because each child is an individual. My five children are individuals. They all have different learning styles. They all learn at different times of the day, different contents; some are visual learners, some are auditory learners, and teachers have to modify programs. There has to be an individualized program plan for each student. There have to be remarks. Parents are far more engaged than they were years ago because they want the best for their children.

It's a very stressful job, and I'd be the first to stand and support individual teachers and their need to be treated as a profession. They should demand not one thing less from their union leaders, who are nothing more than Sid Ryan and the rest of them, blabbering on about power and control. These are professionals. I want them to be thought of the same as any other profession. As I said, if you take a business course, you'll learn that a profession, by definition, is a self-regulating organization.

“Self-regulating” means there has to be a separation of the professional codes of ethics and enforcement, the disciplinary issues as well as the collective bargaining issues, which are the union issues, no different than the

OMA or the College of Pharmacists, which deals with the Ministry of Health on dispensing fees.

I'm saddened when I think of it. I really think there are other things in education that are far, far more important than this bill permits me to speak about, but since I have seven minutes left, I will, anyway. I think I've established that I will not be supporting this bill, which is a payoff for the artificial election promises that Dalton McGuinty and his band put forward during the election. They have never stopped breaking those promises every single day, starting on day one with the health tax—the education tax was to follow. In fact, it's playing its way through right now as I speak.

I think about the rancour on busing that's virtually palpable in my riding. In fact, there was a protest last night at the Durham Board of Education on the very issue of the inequity of the transportation budget by the Minister of Education, who isn't even here to listen to this important debate. I shouldn't say that; it's uncalled for. He probably is attending important meetings; I understand that. Hopefully, he'll get a transcript of Hansard, or Minister Bradley will give it to him tomorrow.

The other one I've been getting a lot of calls on—and it troubles me because these are the most vulnerable—is that they clawed back any surplus on special education that any board had in their planning horizon. They gave them the money, but if you had any reserve, they clawed it back. These were boards that were planning for implementation of special education programs for the very vulnerable children who need those supports. Yet they made an announcement or a claim that they were giving them more money. In fact, I have a memo from my board—there are actually six boards that I represent, including the French language boards. They are shaken.

I try to relate legislation on a personal level. I'll use my own family, because then I can't get into trouble with any of my constituents for using them as references without permission. My wife is a professional and is always updating herself on-line and using resource curriculum material from TVO and other curriculum sources. All teachers do that in their preparation and education plans. Their principals and their staff do work together, whether it's on professional development days or other days.

I think the minister needs to just get out of the way a bit. The unions need to move over a bit and let the college and the profession work things out, because the teachers for the most part have been doing it for years.

I still think of things locally. Special education is a huge challenge, and the new technology of learning, what I call distance learning or individualized learning. Each child today has different learning styles and different learning timetables. They are very computer literate. I think that when we introduced the electronic report card, there was a challenge for many teachers.

We introduced a lot of changes in curriculum and curriculum resources. There was a swamp of changes going on, all of which, I should say, came out of the Royal Commission on Learning. I think there were 123

recommendations from that commission. David Cooke and—I forget who the co-chair of that implementation was, but it was an extremely good reference document. Monique Bégin, that's who it was.

Hon James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): That's where you get all your ideas.

Mr O'Toole: Well, it's true. I think, as Minister Bradley says, that it has good ideas, and we supported them. In fact, Mr Bradley, it did say that the teacher evaluation system and the professional development that was part of it should be separated. It also said that public education should be funded equitably, which we tried to do under the student-focused funding model. In fact, the Royal Commission on Learning said that rich school boards like Toronto were spending \$7,000 and \$8,000 per student and in my area they were spending \$4,000 because they had no assessment base. We fixed those problems.

1650

Now, there were boards that in fact were receiving more, because they had a rich assessment base, and there were boards, mostly rural boards, that had poor assessment bases, so they had no resources. Yet they were all lined up at the employment office at graduation to apply to a university or apply for a job. Why should they not receive the same resources? The argument could be made whether it's enough or too many resources; I don't have a problem with that. But why were people treated so inequitably in Ontario? It took years and years of educators working with politicians of all stripes. We did it. Of course the Toronto board, the Ottawa board, the Hamilton board and the London board—the rich boards—were mad as heck because they were going to get less money per student. But it was going to be equitably divided; it wasn't going to be based on how rich you were for your tax base.

That these changes came through the Royal Commission on Learning has been pointed out. The courage, I put to you, is to do the right thing and vote against your government on this bill, because it is acquiescent to the unions.

Mr Marchese: Union bosses.

Mr O'Toole: No, it is not. The unions have their role, and I respect that role. The college has its role, and I respect that role. The boards of education have a role, and I respect that role. The curriculum isn't different in Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Sudbury or Toronto. The curriculum should be uniform. I believe in province-wide negotiations as well. I believe teachers should be paid for extracurricular activities like drama, music and technical skills, where they have a passion and a thirst to provide students with leadership and inspiration.

There are a lot of ways that you could move forward. I see nothing in this bill except a payday for the likes of some of the union leaders who do a disservice to their very profession. Teachers here today who are members of this assembly need to stand up and put some words around your profession. Don't always be kowtowing to the likes of Earl Manners.

I challenge you: Look at any of them. My point, though, is that there is more to be done. My parting remark is that I believe teachers are an important partner in education. I believe they are professionals. I believe that individually they always want to progress in their profession, whether it's in technology or getting a specialist paper. I believe this legislation denies the encouragement of taking professional development to the highest level so that teachers themselves can achieve their very best potential, not just as teachers but as human beings.

What you're doing with this legislation is the wrong thing. It's mean-spirited to the professional idealism of individual teachers. I ask you to vote against your government on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: I was taken mostly by the remarks by the member for Oak Ridges, who said this bill has so many words such as "repeal" over and over again. He thinks it's so negative and that there's so very little that's positive.

I was reminded about 1995, when the New Democrats, prior to losing, had an employment equity bill. It didn't take the Conservatives long to repeal the employment equity bill. They had no problem repealing that. Their way of restitution and/or remedy, should there be a problem around issues of employment equity, was that we're all equal. You don't need a remedy for any kind of potential abuse because, they argued, we are all equal.

People with disabilities know we're not all equal. People of colour know we are not all equal. Aboriginal people know we are not all equal. Women know we are not all equal. Yet, in their mind, repealing employment equity was the answer because we are all equal. Then he argues that we need to have the program this government is repealing because how else do you ensure quality and qualifications? I wonder whether this applies to politicians as well.

So, if we demand that teachers take 14 courses—seven obligatory and seven optional—does the member from Oak Ridges believe that we should have 14 courses that perhaps politicians should take in order to make us a little more quality, kind of producing politicians? I don't know. I would think he would agree with me.

He spoke about teachers' strikes. In this regard, I think McGuinty would have agreed with him, because he did say in 1992 or 1993 that we should abolish teachers'—

The Acting Speaker: Further questions and comments?

Mr Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I'd just like to follow up on some of the remarks my colleague from Trinity-Spadina made. As a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada, as a lawyer who came to practising law in 1988 and from that time, we never had a requirement to have testing afterwards. We have instead the Law Society of Upper Canada as well as other teaching instruments like the continuing legal education programs, which allow lawyers to take these programs and get upgraded in their profession. So if a lawyer is

practising wills, he or she can get updated in that particular area. It's the same with criminal law, litigation law and so on.

I think the key point with this bill is that it is asking why teachers should be subjected to mandatory courses and having to complete 14 courses every five years to maintain their teaching certificates. If this had to be done for teachers, then perhaps the same should be done for lawyers and for other professions as well. The list goes on and on and on. Some would argue that senior citizens, when they reach a certain age, should be retested for their drivers' licences.

So I think what we're trying to do here and why I support this bill is that it provides some equity and some respect to the professionals who are the teachers. I am a product myself of the public school system. I attended school in Scarborough, Ionview Public School, from kindergarten all the way to grade 8, and from there, high school, from grades 9 to 13 at Winston Churchill Collegiate, also in Scarborough. The teachers there were professional, they were excellent, they were outstanding, and they didn't need to go to take special courses. If they want to upgrade their level of skills, they can do that in their spare time, but to impose it upon them, I think, is unfair. This bill addresses that inequity and repairs it. That's why I support the bill today.

Mr Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey): I'm pleased to just say a couple of words in support of the comments made by my colleagues from Oak Ridges and Durham. Mr O'Toole and Mr Klees did an excellent job, and I agree with what they said in terms of that this is simply kow-towing to the teachers' unions. We're going back to a state in this province that we had prior to our government coming to office in 1995, where the unions were running the education system. It even got so bad that you had to have permission to go into your own schools as an MPP because the so-called professional unions had taken over that turf. They didn't want any politicians around and they didn't want us checking up on them.

The previous speaker from the government side indicated that this is showing respect for teachers, that cancelling teacher testing is somehow showing respect. The professional learning program that we brought in for teachers in 1996, I think, was the greatest show of respect to the profession. It made sure that parents and children know that the teachers are competent, that they're not afraid to be tested from time to time, that they're not afraid to partake in lifelong learning, which is something that was certainly drilled into my head when I went to school from the very good teachers I had, both in elementary and high school, and later in university. It should complement the profession. It should be something the profession welcomes. This is a ridiculous bill that cancels teacher testing, and I don't think the parents have been consulted. I don't think the government consulted anyone except the teachers' unions.

In fact, Mr O'Toole tells me that the Ontario Parent Council is worried that it may not even be in existence in the near future. Apparently, the government hasn't

appointed members to that for some time, and it's a clear indication that you're showing disrespect for the children, disrespect for the parents and disrespect for the teaching profession by introducing this legislation. I certainly won't be supporting it.

1700

Mr Jeff Leal (Peterborough): I'd like to comment on my friend from Durham. My wife happens to be a teacher in the same board as the member from Durham. I don't need to listen to the so-called union bosses the members opposite have identified. Talk to the rank-and-file teachers, the people who are in there day in and day out, who have an enormous responsibility to help shape our young people in this community to go on to be future leaders. When you talk to them, they'll tell you it started with our friend Mr Snobelen when he said, "I'm going to create a crisis in the education system." That's exactly what he did.

Mr Levac: A phony war.

Mr Leal: My friend from Brantford says, "A phony war," and that's exactly what happened. They embarked on a course of action to kick the rank-and-file teachers in Ontario in the teeth. Morale was dissipated by their actions. Day in and day out they wanted to bash our rank-and-file teachers.

As a city councillor, I was often in the classrooms in Peterborough chatting to students and teachers about civics. One of the things they constantly said was, "Why doesn't this government lay off? We're a professional body. They don't pick on anybody else like that, but they want to pick on us. They single us out for their bashing. They don't respect us. We're a profession. We're like lawyers, doctors and others, and we go through every summer"—I know personally that every summer my wife was taking courses to upgrade her skills, and I know that most of the teachers at St Teresa's in Peterborough, where my wife teaches, were taking summer courses. Mr Speaker, I know your wife was taking courses every summer to improve her skills. We know the commitment that rank-and-file teachers have on a day-to-day basis to help shape those young minds so they become the leaders of tomorrow in politics, business and industry.

So this bill is an appropriate bill. Let's get on and pass it.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes to reply.

Mr O'Toole: I appreciate the member from Trinity-Spadina; in fact, I'm looking forward to his comments and his very entertaining style in the next hour. Scarborough Southwest is a lawyer. He's well aware—my son has just passed the bar exams—that if they want to progress in their career, they have to take courses. They have to be familiar with case law and recent court decisions. The case law books that used to be on the shelf are now on the computer.

Mr Levac: They're not forced.

Mr O'Toole: No, they're not forced, but they don't move up the grid unless they take courses, the same as teachers. If you don't take more courses, you don't get

more money. If you're part of a union that ratchets everybody up at the same time, the rising water raises all boats even though some of them may not float.

I guess the other point is that the Simcoe-Grey member had it right, talking about the concern of the parents. The voice of parents: We put student trustees on the board. I think that's an important achievement, not just for students but for the boards to speak about students and about their learning environment. It's absolutely critical, as the parent of five children.

I'm well familiar that the wife of the the member from Peterborough is a teacher, and I commend them. I've not said a negative thing about teachers, nor will I, period. I want that to be clearly on the record.

I can say to you that what I am concerned about is moving the profession into the future. Whether you're a lawyer or any professional—if my son is in commercial law and he wants to stay current, he's going to have to take up issues with securities law. He's going to have to take up issues that are proposed amendments by Mr Phillips with respect to the review of the Ontario Securities Commission.

For any profession and, if you want to look at it, even any trade today, there are no more watchmakers unless they have kept up with the digital world; the basket maker, the wheel maker, all trades and all skills must update themselves. It isn't necessarily mandatory. I think it's more a word of language. Please reflect on this bill and respect teaching.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much for your comments. Further debate?

Mr Marchese: First of all, I want to welcome the good people of Ontario to this political forum. It's 5 o'clock, it's Tuesday and it's good to be here.

Interjection: And we're live.

Mr Marchese: And we are on live, exactly. So don't turn off your sets.

I want to spend a little bit of time reviewing the Tory legacy because I think it's worthwhile. Then I will speak to the issue of professional learning programs that we are here to debate. I will argue that I'm in agreement with what the Liberals are doing and, if I have some time, I want to devote as much critical attention to the Liberals and some of their other initiatives, because I want to share my time equally between bashing the Tory legacy and whacking, as much as I can, the Liberal kinds of initiatives that we are against. I'm an equal-opportunity kind of politician. I don't want to bash one political party and not touch the other.

Interjection: You're an equal-opportunity basher.

Mr Marchese: I am.

I want to start by talking about the comments that the member from Oak Ridges made. I might touch on what the member from Durham said as well, but in a general sort of way.

The member from Oak Ridges—and I want to review this—says that this government is simply repealing an initiative that they disagree with, that it's so totally bad and wrong and there is nothing positive about this

initiative whatsoever. I want to remind those of you who are watching that the Tories repealed many New Democratic initiatives and bills in the space of a couple of weeks, and they didn't have a problem doing that whatsoever. They repealed the employment equity bill that we thought was a progressive measure intended to bring about greater equity for groups of people that have faced discrimination over a long period of time and still face discrimination. Those target groups under employment equity were women, aboriginal people, people of colour and people with disabilities. We went to great pains to try to establish, or at least introduce, a bill that would bring about greater equity for groups that have been discriminated against in the past and continue to suffer discrimination.

How do you deal with those kinds of problems we have in society where, clearly, many politicians of all political stripes would rather not deal with those issues and hope they will go away? We attempted, through the employment equity bill, to say, "Discrimination exists against aboriginal people, against people of colour, against people with disabilities and, yes, even women still today." Most politicians don't want to touch the issue of discrimination. Most politicians don't want to touch the issue of racism. They would prefer that somehow these issues go away, but they don't. They have to be dealt with.

When the Tories got elected in 1995, they had no problem saying, "We're going to repeal that bill," and said quickly, "We are all equal, and because we are all equal, we don't need a bill to bring greater equity to anybody," because, in their view, there is no discrimination. If there were, you could go to the Human Rights Commission, wait a couple of years, wait in line, bring your complaint, find a lawyer, perhaps—if you can afford one, and if can't, you're on your own—and simply line up for years waiting for justice to happen to you. It just doesn't happen that way. It was sad; it was really, really sad, what you guys did. It didn't take you long—a couple of weeks and it was gone; repealed.

Frank Klees, the member for Oak Ridges, today decries the fact that this government simply introduces a bill repealing what they did, and he says, "It's wrong." They all believe it. It wasn't just Frank Klees. They all believe it, I think, the members who have spoken.

The legacy that then-government left us is a pretty pitiful legacy that I also want to review very briefly—maybe 15, 20 minutes—and then move on to other issues, because there's so much to say. The Tories centralized education funding for the purposes of doing one thing, and one thing only: to take money out of the educational system. They took control away from local boards to have the ability to raise money so that they would have local control to deal with their own local issues and centralize power in a way that we have never, ever before seen in Canada, in a way that they would normally decry and attack should any other government have done it. We believe, by centralizing, they took money away—as a ruse, as a ploy, to take money out of the education system. Indeed, they took \$2 billion out of

the education system, all the while denying it for years and years, until Dr Rozanski came in, a man they hired to do a review of the education system. He said, "Yes, you've got to restore \$2 billion," which equalled the money they took out of the education system. It wasn't tough to come to that conclusion.

1710

We told every Minister of Education who was Conservative, and every Premier we've had in that party, that they siphoned off, sucked away, \$2 billion, desperately needed, out of the education system. All the while they denied it, and all the while they would say, as the member for Durham said today, "We tried to bring about greater equity across the board," and they did. They harmonized downward in such a way that they took money away from boards that could have used the money to deal with local inner-city issues. They took it away from Toronto and other boards, and then harmonized downwards across the board in a way that no one really benefited, except all boards were equally hurt by the cuts they made.

Education assistants were fired everywhere they had them. Vice-principals were fired in great numbers across all of Ontario. Guidance counsellors were lost, desperately needed to be held but were fired and lost from many boards where they had them. Special education programs were being lost, and they were desperately needed everywhere they had them. Gym teachers were needed and were lost everywhere we had specialized teachers. Custodial staff, caretakers, were lost in most high schools and reduced almost by half in almost every high school across Ontario. Music teachers were lost across Ontario. Librarians were lost across Ontario.

You understand, these are people we needed in the education system. Librarians would argue that they make an incredible contribution toward the literacy of our students, and indeed they are right. Every study that has ever been done will show that is indeed the case. But many librarians were fired. Our teachers were fired.

We've seen school closures in greater numbers under the Conservative government than ever before. Students were sharing textbooks, tattered textbooks in many cases, across Ontario. You understand, Mr Speaker, you were part of a government that has left us a sorry legacy. There is nothing at all to be proud of in terms of what you people did, but if you hear the member for Oak Ridges or even the member for Durham, you would think, "My God, what they did was so good for every student."

You introduced a new curriculum without helping teachers to prepare for the new curriculum. Yes, it was rigorous, and I don't disagree with making the curriculum rigorous, but you didn't help the teachers at all through any professional development to deal with the new curriculum. You just threw it at them and said, "You take care." If students didn't do so well, it was too bad, so sad. Thousands of students dropped out of high school like you've never, ever seen before. What did you have to help them out? Absolutely nothing. Students failing the grade 10 literacy test, and what did we have for them? Absolument rien. That's a sad legacy.

I just don't know what you people did that I could praise. Not much. I can't attack the curriculum changes too much because I agree with some of them, although some of that curriculum is not doing very much for some of the students, and there's nothing in place to help them out.

You eliminated professional development days—I believe seven out of nine or the 11 that they used to have. I guess teachers don't need professional development. But you had a different formula for getting at that, and I'll get to that in a moment.

It was about bashing teachers. That's what the political game was all about. It is as simple as that. So when my friend Jim from Simcoe-Grey says that the professional learning program was all about showing respect for teachers, I have to respectfully disagree with him. It wasn't about respecting teachers, and the courses the teachers were required to take were not a way to test teachers. But the member from Simcoe-Grey and many others still keep referring to those courses as if they were tests. There were no tests. There are no tests available, anywhere in North America or Europe or anywhere that I'm aware of, that have been devised to test a teacher. But the Tories keep on referring to anything they did as testing teachers, teachers' tests. Why do they do that? Why do they still say it? Why did they say it then? Because to simply say, "We're testing teachers," goes well with about the 30% or 40% of the public who doesn't like teachers, who may have had a negative experience with teachers, who actually believe that teachers are incompetent.

You, Conservative individual members in government at the time, created the image and the belief that teachers were incompetent and that you needed to fix them. That's what these courses were all about. John Snobelen's notion of creating a crisis is connected to all of this. Talking about teacher testing is talking about creating a crisis, creating divisions between "us" and "them," because what you wanted to do was to find enough people out there who would say that what you were doing was right. And how do you do that? You turn a third of the public, or half the public if you can, against another group that you hoped they would hate. You knew very well that you could always find enough people in society who would hate teachers. I don't know why you didn't go after lawyers, because you would probably find more people hating lawyers than you did finding people hating teachers. It seems to me that it was much easier to go after teachers than it was going after lawyers, or someone else. Pick an enemy, like Bush in the USA does. Pick a country you can pick on just because you can.

You guys did that with teachers: Pick on someone just because you can, and pick on teachers because it's good politics, eh, Doctor?

Mr Qaadri: That's right. There are Republicans. You're so right.

Mr Marchese: Yes, and that's what that was all about. The idea of forcing teachers to take courses was not a pedagogical decision; it was a political decision.

It's really very simple. You can say all you want to hide it and mask it and you can manipulate it however you want and you can euphemize it however you want, but it was really political, not pedagogical.

Mr Qaadri: That's a new word: "euphemize"; interesting.

Mr Marchese: You can do that. It's poetic licence in this place.

How brilliant it was to attack teachers through the union bosses, because you can't attack teachers. It's difficult, you understand. The member from Durham's spouse is a teacher, and everybody knows a teacher here. We all love teachers, don't we? So you can't attack teachers directly. How do you do it? You attack them through the teachers' unions, because that's how you get to it.

You know now and you knew then that if you go after unions and union bosses, you're likely to get 20% of the public out there, 25%, possibly even 30%, saying, "Union bosses: That's what's ruining this country." You know that. You know it now and you knew it then. It's an "us and them" kind of politics.

1720

I've never seen it like that ever in this place as I've seen it under the leadership of Mike Harris, in particular, and to a lesser extent under Ernie Eves. But Mike Harris was the worst in terms of creating a politics of polarization in this place. It was pretty bad; pretty evil, I would say.

Why would you require teachers to take 14 courses and not require politicians to take 14 courses? God knows, politicians could sure use some courses. You could, of course, argue about the benefit of certain courses that we would be obliged to take. You would argue the merits of that, I'm sure. But if we require teachers to take 14 courses, I have a feeling, a hunch—I could be wrong—that a lot of politicians in this place could use 14 courses, seven obligatory and seven optional. I could be wrong.

I have a feeling that doctors possibly could use 14 courses a year, seven optional and seven obligatory. I could be wrong. I have a feeling that nurses could use 14 courses—seven optional, seven obligatory—but I could be wrong. I have a feeling that paramedics could use 14 courses, but I could be wrong. Police officers, every kind of profession that deals with the issue of public safety, could use those courses.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Failing—what do you do? I don't know. How do you unelect politicians?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, you can't depoliticize, but how do you unelect the politicians if they fail the courses? This is true.

How come we didn't oblige any other profession in the same way that we oblige teachers? La raison is because it was easy to pick on teachers. It was easy to create the image that teachers are overpaid and underworked because you could find anyone in society, in-

cluding this place, but generally everywhere, who would say, "My God, teachers are overpaid." Why? "Because they have the summers off. It's just not right that they should have the summers off. I don't have the summer off, so why should they?"

Politicians, you know, do have some time off. We do.

Interjection: When was that?

Mr Marchese: We do have some time off and we're paid for it. We are. Teachers are paid too. But we don't complain that there are periods when we're not in this assembly. Presumably most of us are working out there during the time that we're not here. Presumably we are. We don't attack ourselves for that, but we can attack teachers. Why do we do that? Because it's easy.

By the way, even though I'd say this, there are a whole lot of people who hate politicians, and you know that, Mr Speaker, because it's easy to hate a politician, right? In the scale of popularity there is no predilection for loving politicians; there isn't. So that part is true.

It is equally true that when you came into power you pretended to be the non-political party, the party that didn't want to be a political party, which is oxymoronic, I've got to admit. You knew that too because you came here knowing full well that the idea of calling yourselves the non-political party had resonance out there. They liked that. But it's contradictory. You can't have a non-political party. It doesn't exist. It can't happen.

Everything you did had a lot to do with politicizing education, attacking the teaching profession, and then you had to find the ways to do it. So you had Snobelen creating the crisis. Poor guy, he got caught. He didn't want to, but he got caught, and it was really sad for him. Well, I don't think he regretted it. I don't think John ever had any problems being caught on camera saying, "We've got to create a crisis," you've got to admit. But that's how it all began, and so the whole thing unravelled in that way and then it simply continued. Then you just had to find the right tools in the toolbox to simply get people to hate the profession, and the teacher testing was all part of it. It was all part of the politics of division. Every Tory who went out there and every political staffer from the Conservative Party who went out there was saying, "This is a teacher test." You had Madame Ecker from time to time calling it a teacher test and from time to time calling it something else. Depending on whom she spoke with, she would say, "Yes, this is a teacher test," and if she was speaking to teachers, she would say, "This is a professional learning program."

You understand the politics of that, right? Because you can't confuse teachers. You can't say to teachers, "This is a test," because they know it's not a test. What teachers know is that they've got to pay for those programs. They knew that. Teachers had to pay for those courses. It's not as if the government said, "We think you should be taking the courses and we're going to pay for them for you." No, the teachers had to pay to get re-trained to ensure quality and qualification. So we obliged them to take seven obligatory courses to ensure quality and qualification.

Le problème happens to be that those courses people took had nothing to do with what those teachers were doing in the classroom. Some courses, I suspect, might have been useful as a matter of interest. Yes, I imagine that in each course you would learn something. But whether or not each and every one of those courses, seven obligatory and seven not, were good for the classroom teacher is in my humble view very questionable, given the kind of feedback we got from teachers as to what they were obliged to take. So did it test teachers? Not really. "But we did force them to pay for those courses and we, as Tories, could feel good to say to the public, 'Oh, no, we're testing them. You parents feel good out there. You feel good because we're testing them daily.'" Did they learn much from it? I don't think so, and most teachers tell us that.

That's why Liberals said they would repeal the professional learning program act that created it, and that's why New Democrats said they would do the same. That's why I stand here today supporting this initiative, because I think it's the right thing to do. There are some concerns, I must admit. There is nothing I have learned yet about what this government is doing that speaks to what the government is going to do once they've repealed this bill. You would think that a year after being in government they would have some ideas that they could put in place relatively quickly to make this situation better, but we have nothing. Yes, they have talked about the idea of mentoring, and they've talked about a few other things: professional development days, maybe increasing them—

Mr Qaadri: Summer programs.

Mr Marchese: Yes, they've talked about summer programs. This is true. They've done that. But I haven't seen anything yet by way of what I think we should be seeing a year after being in office. They are much quicker on some other things, but on this, which is much easier, we haven't seen much.

I have to tell you that I've got a lot of other concerns about what this government is doing, because while the Tories had a predilection for obfuscation, this government has a similar predilection to obfuscate. While they argue that only Tories used to do that, I want to illustrate how Liberals are very much doing the same. They can do something as practical as getting rid of this professional learning program because it's not pedagogical—no problemo—but in terms of how they're dealing with some other issues, I want to point out some problems because I think it's instructive in terms of understanding the *modus operandi* of the Liberal Party.

1730

I want to comment on a few things that the Minister of Education is doing, has responded to, and I'll begin by talking about the issue of busing. You understand that the former government, the Tories, used to say, "We are treating everybody equally. We had benchmarks, we had a funding formula," and the funding formula was really a bad formula? It was inadequate, it was underfunding, and that's what it was about. We never allowed boards to catch up in terms of inflationary increases, so every year

boards were getting less and less and every year we were waiting for the Conservative government to deal with the issue of transportation because we were hearing out there that there were simply not enough dollars to deal with the issue of busing, particularly for regions of the north or the east or other areas where you have to cover a whole lot of area. They said, "We need more money to be able to transport students from one place to the other," otherwise you have students travelling for hours on a bus.

So then the Liberals get into power and say, "We've got a solution." They say, "We have an equitable solution." They call it Equitable Allocation Through a New Funding Model for Student Transportation in Ontario. I would remind the Liberals who are here, and you would know better, that under different circumstances—this is not a prop—when the government says "equitable allocation" and the result, which I'm about to demonstrate, is inequitable, Liberals would have accused the Tories, as I did in every instance, that what it says in the title belies the content of it.

You are adopting the same methodology and language as the Tories did. This model that you call a discussion paper, that your Minister of Education calls a discussion paper, is inequitable and it is in place at the moment. Your minister yesterday, in response to my question, said, "This is a discussion paper," meaning, "If it's a discussion paper, no decisions have been made." Is that correct, Speaker? Yes, of course. Liberals, is that correct? If it's a discussion paper, that means no decision has been made; is that correct, Doctor? Generally speaking, right? But what has happened? The Minister of Education has allowed a little more than half of the boards to get extra money, and that is being phased in this year and next year. Thirty-one boards are getting zero dollars this year, and next year they have to cut.

I will admit that your minister is giving a 2% increase to all boards. I will admit that, because if I don't, then it would not admit to a particular reality or truth. It's the truth. So when you raise this point with the minister, he will say, "It's not true. Everybody got an increase." While that is true, 31 boards will be getting cuts next year, and the other approximately 41 boards are getting increases this year, as part of the phase-in, and next year. So you understand, Dave, that this is not a discussion paper. The decision has been made. But yesterday the minister was so smug in terms of—you're doubtful? Dave Levac from Brant is doubtful. Come on. I thought I outlined it pretty clearly. It's clear: Boards are getting money this year. If 41 boards are getting money this year, that means it's no longer a discussion paper. It means decisions have been made. That is why 31 boards are preparing for the cuts they have to make next year by making sure that they are creating different policies that will make it possible for certain students not to have a seat on that bus.

I don't know whether the good people of Ontario are following this. I hope I've been clear to point out that this Minister of Education—and he's a symbol of what the Liberal Party does on many other issues—obfuscates, manipulates the facts over and over again.

The Clerk is looking askance. I'm getting the impression that one of the Clerks doesn't think that's proper.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Manipulation of the facts is not proper? I'll rephrase it.

The Acting Speaker: I've consulted with the table. I would ask the member for Trinity-Spadina to withdraw the word "obfuscate."

Mr Marchese: I'll withdraw the word "manipulation."

The Acting Speaker: Did you not hear what I said? The word "obfuscate."

Mr Marchese: "Obfuscate"? You're kidding. Isn't that funny? What you wanted me to withdraw was the word "manipulation," not "obfuscate." Isn't that interesting. OK, I will withdraw "obfuscation," which essentially means "confusing," by the way, so I'm not quite sure what I'm withdrawing, but if you want—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, you made that decision, not the Chair. Mr Speaker, "obfuscate" means "to confuse." "Manipulation," in my mind, is stronger than the other one, but you've asked me to withdraw "obfuscation," not "manipulation." I wanted to clarify, that's all. I'll withdraw "obfuscation," although I've got to tell you that when you do that it really makes it tough in this place to find appropriate words to describe what one needs to describe.

This minister is manipulating the facts—you said that was OK—and I'll show how he's doing that on the matter of special education as well, although I prefer "obfuscation."

Mr Levac: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is a question of whether or not we're speaking to the bill. I know there is some latitude given, but I would suggest that the PLP is an important aspect of education. I know the member has indicated he wants to do that, and I would advise that I think it's been long enough that he hasn't come back to topic, and I'd appreciate he do so.

The Acting Speaker: I believe the member for Trinity-Spadina is speaking to the bill.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Dave, I'm a bit surprised at you. I gave the Liberal members a whole lot of leeway as they meandered here and there. I noticed that the Tories meandered here and there as well, but connected to the bill. I'm trying to do the same. I wanted to argue that when the Conservative Party manipulated certain things, I was showing how you guys are doing the same, creating a link, while at the same time supporting this bill.

Mr Levac: PLP.

Mr Marchese: Yes.

Mr Levac: OK, sorry. I apologize.

Mr Marchese: I'm just putting out the facts, because I've got a little time. I wanted to talk about special ed. Here you had the Conservative government cutting special education programs and special-ed teachers. You guys come in and say, "We're fixing that." I was speaking to the negative legacy left by the Tories, and I want to

point out that you guys are manipulating this issue in a way that I believe is wrong.

Let me explain it. The Minister of Education, about a couple of months ago, in July, announced he was giving \$100 million for special ed. That's what he said. Simultaneously, he said he's taking away \$100 million from the boards. That's what he did, and that's what he's doing. He said, "We're taking that money," which presumably exists in surplus dollars somewhere—

Mr Levac: In reserve funds.

Mr Marchese: —in reserve funds—"and we're going to put it in a fund that boards have to apply for."

Let me explain the problems around what he did in terms of how he manipulated that. First of all, boards have to fill out forms in order to qualify for special education dollars. You need a psychologist to sign off on that to be able to get special education dollars—right, Dave? That was the final phase of the Tory legacy around the application of special education dollars.

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The Conservative government had an allocation of money which they presumed to be \$35 million. When you guys got into power and you realized that the final phase was costing close to \$100 million, you said, "My God, what do we do? We don't have an allocation of \$100 million. We only have an allocation of \$35 million." Gerard Kennedy, the Minister of Education, said, "How do I deal with this problem? I don't have the money. What do I do?" So he waits for seven months; he waits for seven months to make a decision about the release of the money.

Now, some boards are saying, "The money is not coming. It's not flowing as it should. What do we do?" They say, "Let's put it aside, because we don't know whether this government is going to flow the money as they said they would, and if it is gone, that means we'll be stuck with programs for which we have no money." So they put it in the reserve funds. What Gerard Kennedy, the Minister of Education, did was to take money from the reserve fund of 2002-03, which has already been spent. We called all the boards; we called them personally.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You can say what you like. We called them because we wanted to be sure that we were on the right track.

They took money, presumably surplus in reserve funds, that was spent in 2002-03, and they also took money from the reserve of 2003-04, money which was allocated to be spent this September. That special education money was going to be spent this September. In July, the Minister of Education made the announcement that "We're putting \$100 million into special ed, but we're taking away money from the boards that presumably have these surplus dollars that were not being spent." And what I have told you through our research is that boards spent the money in 2002-03—but it appeared in the books as if it was surplus—and money that would have been spent in 2003-04, this September, had the money flowed from the Ministry of Education.

To complicate the matter even further, the Minister of Education says in his document, which I have read, “We don’t have \$100 million to give to the boards”—money that has already been, or ought to have been, allocated on the basis of filling out those forms. He says, “We don’t have \$100 million; it’s only \$50 million.” It’s in your documents. I have read them.

So you don’t have \$100 million any more to give out—which you stole from the boards. You only have \$50 million. Not only that—and Dave, you might be aware of it because you’re in the teaching profession—you have to apply through a new application process. Money that should have been given on the basis of the old system or the old formula for filling out the forms, you now have to apply for. However, the application process is not yet in place. You took \$100 million away from boards, which they had spent or were going to spend, and you’re telling them, “We don’t have \$100 million; it’s only \$50 million. Oh, but by the way, we don’t yet have an application for you to fill out.”

You see what I mean? I find it very complicated. Only through this kind of environment do I have the time to be able to explain what you’re doing, which you attacked when the Tories were doing it. So I take the opportunity to attack the Tory legacy and to attack, similarly, what you are doing. So while there are some initiatives that you are engaged in that I can agree with, I want to expose the politics that you are engaged in that I believe is manipulative. Unless you find those opportunities in this place to do so, where are you going to find the time?

Similarly, with capping class size—the member from Durham talked about that. The member from Oak Ridges talked about class size as an issue. Capping class size costs anywhere from \$500 million to \$1 billion, we estimate conservatively. The Tories estimate that it’s \$1.2 billion, \$1.5 billion; I don’t know. But a conservative figure to cap class sizes is \$500 million to \$1 billion. That’s a whole lot of pecunia that you don’t have. You don’t have it. So this government says, it has allocated—I believe it’s close to \$100 million—for capping class sizes.

The problem is that in my phoning around, a whole lot of classes have gone up and not many classes have gone down. Conveniently, the Minister of Education and the Premier go to a particular classroom where classes have gone down for one reason or another, presumably or possibly because there are fewer students going to that school; therefore, you have smaller classes. But on the whole, many classes are going up and not many classes in grades 1, 2 and 3 are going down.

The Minister of Education uses, simultaneously, class reduction and capping of class sizes as being the same. They’re not the same. The Liberal promise was that classes in grades 1, 2 and 3 would be capped at a certain number. You don’t find the government going around every school and/or giving us a report that would tell us how many classes in grades 1, 2 and 3 have gone down as a way of determining the fact that the capping of class sizes can indeed happen in three year’s time. I am telling you, it will never happen. I am predicting now that it

cannot and will never happen because you simply do not have the money to make that promise happen. If the program costs anywhere from \$500 million to \$1 billion, you cannot make that happen, because the money is not there to cap class sizes. So you, Liberal government, are going to do the same as the Conservative government in terms of naming something in a way that you think you can get away with by simply talking about reduction of class size as being synonymous with the capping of class size. I’m telling you, Dave, you can’t do it. You’re not going to be able to do it.

I want to point this out because people out there need to know the facts. And you’re never going to get the facts by way of a comment that you can make with a journalist where the journalist only allows you two key words because that’s all the time they have for you to explain this kind of stuff. You need the time to be able to adequately manage an issue. That’s how you do it.

It’s easy to say, “We are repealing the professional learning program,” and it’s done. Many of us have explained that the professional learning programs were not intended to help teachers. And we explained, I explained, and the Liberals before me similarly have done the work to say that this was not about helping teachers, but it was about punishing teachers.

Nowhere at any time did the past Conservative government talk about mentoring, which the Liberals are talking about now. We have yet to see any concrete idea or concrete proposal put forth that speaks to what mentoring means and what they would do to help teachers deal with the issues they face on a daily basis. The Tories never did that. Teachers would love to have the help of other professionals to deal with behavioural problems in the classroom. Wouldn’t they, Dave? Teachers would love to have the help of other colleagues to show them, teach them, mentor them on how to deal with learning behaviour, which is often a problem in class.

Having been in one committee where we were dealing with the issue of alcohol, the effects of drinking alcohol, what that does to students and how it is that students behave in ways that you cannot tell there’s a learning disability, we have never once, in the eight years the Conservative government was there, said, “This is a problem.” There are 100,000 students affected by the problem that alcohol causes when mothers are pregnant. We never once heard the government say, “We’re going to help teachers understand and identify the possible manifestations of the syndrome of alcohol drinking in a way that, having detected it, they would know what to do with those students.”

What do we say? We say those students are disruptive and have a behavioural problem, and then we kick them out. We kick them out for a week or two weeks because teachers can’t cope with that problem, and that solves the problem.

How teachers would love to get the help they need to be able to better identify a learning problem or a behavioural problem, because in learning how to deal with it, they’re going to be able to teach that student better. They’re going to be able to control the class better, and

they're going to have the time to better teach that individual and that class.

There's so much abuse going on in so many homes. It could be of a sexual nature or of a psychological nature. How much help would a teacher want and need to be able to identify those problems and help those students deal with those social, psychological and, sometimes, economic problems. But they don't have the resources, the time, the training or the mentoring to adequately deal with that. Not once did the Conservative government bring concrete proposals that would deal with that.

Yes, the Liberals are talking about mentoring programs, but one year after their election we have nothing. I suspect the Liberals will find something for us to debate in due course: if not this year, then next, or, I'm certain, just before the election.

I do have some concerns, because connected with the professional learning program was the requirement that new teachers would have to write a test. I personally think this test that new teachers have to take is almost useless. Why do I say that? Because new teachers coming into our educational system today are much better prepared than ever before: better prepared than I was as a teacher, better prepared than Dave and better prepared than a couple of other teachers I know in this room. The training my daughter got as a teacher at Ryerson Polytech is far superior to anything I got through my learning at U of T and my one year at the faculty of education—far superior.

We would require them to write a test to do what? The failure rate is so minuscule that it's pointless to force teachers to pay for and write this test. But the Tories loved the idea of testing, because they could say to the public, "We're testing teachers." I have a worry that the Liberals might continue with that test. I don't believe I've heard any Liberal speak about that. Maybe they will, but I want to alert them to this problem, and I want to tell them that.

On August 16, the Liberals floated their discussion paper, and their solution may be Liberal teacher-testing schemes. On page 16, they state: "Having an entry test to teaching is consistent with our approach of treating teachers as responsible professionals and is helpful to ensure student familiarity with Ontario curriculum and provincial education objectives."

I have a problem with that. Are the Liberals going to continue with that teacher test as a way of their ongoing connection with the Tory teacher test, as a way of reminding the public that they too are not backing away from the teacher test? I read this for Hansard, for those of you who are watching and for the Liberals who are in this chamber, because I suspect some of you don't know this. But maybe some of you ought to reflect on the implications of this, because I argue that testing a new teacher is simply a waste of money, and forcing a new teacher to pay, I believe, a \$200 fee is an egregious sum that they ought not to be paying.

Hopefully, in due course we will listen to other Liberal speakers and hopefully they will comment on this. If the

Liberal members themselves are a bit timid to touch the subject, hopefully we'll have the Minister of Education or the parliamentary assistant at some point speak to this issue, because I would be interested to know whether that's the same track you're pursuing or whether or not you want to end this notion of a teacher test that, in our view, is more political than pedagogical and that taxes teachers unnecessarily and forces them to pay sums of money on a test that I don't believe is necessary.

I'm looking forward to Liberals talking about the other ideas they might have, today or another day, on professional learning days: whether they think that what we have is adequate or whether they believe that two more days is adequate or whether they believe we should have more.

I'm looking forward to the day when Liberals will comment about the Ontario College of Teachers, where I know that Gerard Kennedy, in the debates I used to have with him on a regular basis, advocated what New Democrats advocated: that two thirds of the members of the Ontario College of Teachers ought to be teachers. I remember Kennedy agreeing with me. I didn't see that in the Liberal plan, but in the debates he agreed with me and pursued the same course.

I am looking forward to the time when Monsieur Kennedy, the Minister of Education, is going to come forth with a plan to deal with the Ontario College of Teachers. My hope is that there will be two thirds members of that organization who will be teachers. It is my firm belief that they ought to be, that teachers should be there, mindful of the profession; mindful of the qualifications that we expect of teachers; mindful of the fact that if we have teacher incompetence, they would be the first to say that those teachers need to go; mindful of the fact that the college of teachers is there not to protect teacher incompetence but to deal with it; that the Ontario College of Teachers ought to be there to develop professional learning and professional development courses for teachers because it's good for the profession, because it's good for the Ontario College of Teachers and it's good for individual teachers and everyone else.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, are you hinting that I have one more minute? I'll tell you, Speaker, that there is a lot yet to debate. I did want to talk about the issue of school closures as well, but we don't have enough time; we will on another day, when I get to finish my allocation here.

I urge people who have questions about the issues I raised to call me. Call me at Queen's Park if they want; call the constituency office: 603-1240. If you want to talk to me about Liberal manipulation around the issues of special ed, closing schools and busing, call us; we want to know.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Alvin Curling

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Kular, Kuldeep (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Hon / L'hon Leona (L) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
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Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Milloy, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Van Bommel, Maria (L)
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Guelph-Wellington	Sandals, Liz (L)	Nipissing	Smith, Monique M. (L)
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Northumberland	Rinaldi, Lou (L)
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Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	McGuinty, Hon / L'hon Dalton (L) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Thornhill	Racco, Mario G. (L)
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Ottawa-Orléans	McNeely, Phil (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior- Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
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Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

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