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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 11 April 2006

Mardi 11 avril 2006

Speaker
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 11 April 2006

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 11 avril 2006

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): It's not only in health care that wait times are increasing. The Liberals promised Ontario in the last election that they would help the children who need help the most: those with special needs. More than 9,000 disabled Ontario children are on waiting lists at children's treatment centres, awaiting services or therapy. In one year, the number of children on the waiting list has increased by 25%. The average time that kids are waiting has increased from 24 to 31 weeks in just one year.

Why are Ontarians paying more in taxes while disabled children, our most vulnerable people, are receiving less service? These services are vital. We know that early intervention helps many disabled children reach their full potential. It is more effective and reduces hospitalization. Yet the McGuinty government did not give these services any increase last year, and no specific commitment this year. No wonder wait times are increasing.

Your government promised to help Ontario's children, but you have broken your promise. You have even cut the budget for the Ministry of Children. Ontarians are paying more taxes, so why isn't there enough money for children with disabilities? Our children deserve an answer.

SCARBOROUGH WALK OF FAME

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): What do NBA basketball star Jamaal Magloire, renowned Canadian artist Doris McCarthy, internationally recognized plastic surgeon Dr. Lloyd Carlsen, broadcaster and community activist David Onley, Vicky Sunohara, a veteran member of the Olympic women's hockey team, Order of Canada recipient Dr. Joseph Wong, and Juno Award-winning recording artist Maestro Fresh Wes Williams all have in common? They are the inaugural inductees in the Scarborough Walk of Fame.

The Scarborough Walk of Fame is the initiative of Stand Up Scarborough. It is designed to celebrate members of the community, present and past, who have made outstanding contributions in their fields of endeavour and who are recognized for their achievements locally, nationally and internationally.

The event, planned for May 17, 2006, has two major elements: the embedding of the inductees' stars in a permanent installation at the Scarborough Town Centre at 2 p.m., followed by an evening awards gala at the Delta Toronto East for 500 guests, hosted by television personalities Colin Mochrie and his wife, Debra McGrath.

As an important part of the plans for the gala evening, net proceeds from the dinner and an on-site fundraising raffle, up to a total of \$30,000, will go to support three not-for-profit organizations which, through their activities, have made a real contribution to the lives of young people in Scarborough. The three charities that have been selected are Tropicana Community Services, East Scarborough Storefront and West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre. For more information, go to the Stand Up Scarborough website, www.standupscarborough.ca.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott (Whitby–Ajax): Yesterday the Minister of Health was telling us that all is okay in Ontario when it comes to patient wait times, using median wait times as the backbone of his argument. This does not give Ontarians an accurate picture of where matters stand.

The McGuinty Liberals are simply incapable of being straight with Ontarians, and patient wait times are no exception. Using phony numbers and inaccurate calculations may shield them for now, but I can tell you, the people of Whitby–Ajax are not easily fooled.

During the by-election, wait times were a major issue for constituents in Whitby–Ajax as I went door to door listening to their concerns. They knew the McGuinty Liberals had made numerous promises when it came to wait times, but like many other promises, they knew they would never follow through.

In Whitby–Ajax, local cancer surgery wait times are up 67%, hip replacement wait times are up 59% and angioplasty wait times are up a whopping 213%.

On March 30, the people of Whitby–Ajax said they had had enough of broken promises and paying more while getting less from the McGuinty Liberals. They've had enough of phony statistics and inaccurate information. They want results on wait times.

I was sent here to try to deliver those results. I will be working hard to make sure the McGuinty Liberals are held accountable for their broken promises on wait times. The people of Whitby–Ajax deserve better, and I will be working hard to make sure that happens.

HERITAGE PROGRAMS

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I want to talk briefly about the black history and culture programs that exist—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Order. This isn't a good start. Start over, member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Marchese: Thank you, Speaker, for helping me out in that regard.

I want to talk about the promotion of black history and culture programs. Part of the petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the black cultural heritage program at the Toronto District School Board provides a valuable program where children in elementary school learn about the origins, history and the role of black people throughout Canada and around the world; ...

“Whereas when he was the opposition critic responsible for education, the” former “Minister of Education supported the funding of these programs:

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide Ministry of Education funding for the black cultural heritage program in the upcoming budget.”

We know that the former Minister of Education met with this group. Recently I got a letter from the chair of the committee for the promotion of black history and culture programs, and she says the following:

“I am writing you on behalf of the committee for the promotion of black history and culture programs.... As you were present when the former Minister of Education, Minister Kennedy, initiated a desire to meet with the committee, and host of the press conference held on February 28, 2006, I value your input and direction. I'm disappointed and concerned about the fact that Kennedy never followed up on several letters and phone calls to his office. I'm very concerned as to the whereabouts of the petitions we handed over, as the Minister of Education office has not been able to answer that question, and has also stated that they don't know if Minister Papatello will take up the issue, and further recommended that maybe we start from scratch.”

They're looking to the new minister to—

The Speaker: Thank you.

1340

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre): Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative disease that slowly robs a person of their independence. It is a cruel disease that takes over entire lives; not only the person affected by Parkinson's but also their family. For most, their minds stay sharp while every day they witness their body's decreasing limitations due to tremors, slowness, stiffness, impaired balance and rigid muscles. Some may have difficulty walking, talking and swallowing. This disease is complex, hard to diagnose and random. It can strike anyone, women and men of all ages, ethnic backgrounds

and lifestyles, and while the vast majority of people with Parkinson's are over 60, 10% are diagnosed before the age of 50, many of them in their 30s and 40s when they are busy raising children and building careers.

April is Parkinson's Awareness Month, and I am pleased to have several members of the Parkinson's Society of Canada attending in our gallery today.

We can improve the quality of life for people living with Parkinson's disease through research, education, advocacy and support services.

I encourage members to participate in SuperWalk 2006 this September. This walk is the largest national fundraiser for the Parkinson's Society of Canada. Last year alone, over \$600,000 was raised for research. Together, we have the ability to make a difference.

The James Parkinson tulip for years has been a symbol of Parkinson's disease and has become a hope for a cure. Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to wear the tulip pin to commemorate Parkinson's Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mrs. Jeffrey has asked for unanimous consent to wear the tulip pin in recognition of Parkinson's Awareness Month. Agreed? Agreed.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Ted Arnott (Waterloo–Wellington): The McGuinty Liberals' broken promises mean that Ontarians are paying more and getting less when it comes to their health care.

While in opposition, the Liberals promised to reduce wait times. When they came to power, the Minister of Health promised a wait times website that would let Ontarians know how long they would have to wait for crucial procedures. He promised in November 2004 that the website would be up in a matter of months. At the time, he said, “The more Ontarians know about the wait time situation, the more empowered they will be to hold the government ... to account.” The following month he promised that the website would be updated with information about how long patients were waiting.

Almost a year later, in October 2005, the information was finally posted. The minister claimed the data was reliable and up to date. However, as soon as the minister was questioned on the data, he began to back away from it. He did this back in December when he said that we really couldn't trust his website; then he did it again yesterday when our caucus confronted him with evidence that wait times are increasing in many communities across Ontario. For example, he has presided over a 14% increase to cancer surgery wait times in the Waterloo–Wellington LHIN. This is totally unacceptable.

With cancer wait times growing longer, Ontarians rightly wonder where the health tax money has gone. We do know it was the largest tax increase in history, we know it broke the central promise of the Liberals' election campaign, and we know that a middle-income taxpayer is paying \$600 more a year tax in provincial tax and getting less. Ontarians as a whole are paying more

and getting less, proof that the McGuinty Liberal government is conniving, incompetent and—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Members' statements.

EVENTS IN DON VALLEY WEST

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne (Don Valley West): I rise today to recognize and celebrate community volunteerism and enthusiasm in my riding of Don Valley West.

Last Friday, I had the pleasure of presenting team awards to the Leaside Flames atom hockey team. The Flames had a stellar season which culminated in their winning the Greater Toronto Hockey League championship. Anyone who has coached a community team or driven kids to practice on a dark winter morning knows the long hours of dedication that support a team like the Flames. The Flames went on to host the Ontario Hockey Federation championship tournament, and this would not have been possible without the support of boosters and local organization and companies.

I want to recognize that effort today, and in particular Chick Evans, the Greater Toronto Hockey League director, David Damon, the Ontario Hockey Federation treasurer, and local folks Ian Beverly and Thanaf Kirkof, the co-chairs of the host organizing committee.

I also want to celebrate an event in the north end of my riding, not in an arena but in a school, last Saturday morning. The Owen Public School Festival of Words, spearheaded by Shannon MacDonald, chair of the school council, was a wonderful blend of music featuring Owen Sound's music sensation Tanglefoot and workshops on reading and family literacy. Dozens of kids with their moms, dads and friends filled the school library. This is the kind of community use of schools that instills a love of reading and builds community all at the same time.

Many thanks to the parents and community members of Leaside, York Mills and communities across Don Valley West and indeed across the province who play such an important role in building community, bettering the lives of our children and challenging them to dream and strive for goals on the ice, in school and in their lives.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): In the business world that both I and the Leader of the Opposition come from, the rules are very simple: If you disclose only some of the financial facts of a business transaction, you get sued. If, heaven forbid, you get sued and end up in court, the law says you must swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Selectively cherry-picking facts is not allowed.

Yesterday, after question period, I called Andrew Williams, the CEO of the Huron-Perth Healthcare Alliance. I raised with him John Tory's allegation that cancer wait times are up dramatically—some 38% at Stratford General Hospital. I cannot tell you how deeply disappointed the wonderful and caring health care professionals in my hometown were to hear that Mr. Tory did

not take the time to get all of the facts. Had he taken his own advice and picked up the phone, he would have learned what I have just learned: Namely, that looking at surgeries performed over the Christmas period in a rural hospital is a mug's game. The CEO has advised me that, based on the latest available numbers, which will be posted to the wait times website in four days, average cancer wait times are not up 10 days but two. Average cataract wait times are down 29 days, and average knee replacement wait times are down 102 days.

I say to John Tory, this is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. You and your researchers should try it, sir. Both the courts and the people of Stratford take a very dim view of factual cherry pickers.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the government for the health initiatives announced in the budget committing itself to the health needs of the people of Ontario and of the GTA.

I believe we are all aware of the prime importance of health care and what role it plays in the lives of Ontario citizens on a daily basis. The government's dedication to provide an additional \$1.9 billion for health care in 2006-07 alone—which will, by 2008-09, total \$34.4 billion in additional investment in health care services—is the first time in Ontario's history that a government has made a multi-year funding commitment to hospitals in the province. This will provide hospitals in all of Ontario with stable funding that will help in long-term planning. This, as well as the continued endeavour to provide shorter wait times for patients, shows all Ontarians how important health concerns are to this government.

In Scarborough we have seen increased funding to hospitals, a wait-time strategy implemented, funding for equipment, improvement and repair for existing hospital infrastructure, as well as investments in community health and community mental health services. In addition, the government has made clear that it will do all it can to help maintain and support 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week services for all three main hospitals in the Scarborough area. The government is doing much to provide patients in my riding access to the services they need when they need them.

Those of us in my riding are eager to see all these efforts bear fruit in Scarborough as well as across the rest of the province.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT, 2006

LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 99, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act /
Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de
retraite.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader): Let's find out what this is about.

Mr. Dave Levac (Brant): I've got somebody's attention for sure.

The bill will allow police officers who are transferred from municipal police services to the OPP to transfer their pensions from the municipal pension plan to the OPP pension plan. This is currently not possible, and seriously disadvantages the officers whose municipalities have chosen to contract out their police services to the Ontario Provincial Police.

I would like us to support this bill and make sure that those police officers, when they retire, receive this pension.

PROTECTION OF MINORS
FROM SEXUALLY EXPLICIT GOODS
AND SERVICES ACT, 2006
LOI DE 2006
SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS
CONTRE LES BIENS ET SERVICES
SEXUELLEMENT EXPLICITES

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 100, An Act to protect minors from exposure to sexually explicit goods and services / Projet de loi 100, Loi visant à protéger les mineurs contre les biens et services sexuellement explicites.

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

The member may wish to make a brief statement.

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): I'd like to recognize the work that was done on this particular bill by Bob Wood, a former member of this Legislature.

The bill prohibits persons from knowingly selling, offering to sell, distributing, offering to distribute, or displaying sexually explicit goods or services to a minor in any premises or place.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 11, 2006, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 98. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: Mr. Bradley has moved government notice of motion number 98. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnett, Ted	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Arthurs, Wayne	Hoy, Pat	Peterson, Tim
Balkissoon, Bas	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bartolucci, Rick	Jeffrey, Linda	Racco, Mario G.
Bentley, Christopher	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kwintar, Monte	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Brotan, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Bryant, Michael	Levac, Dave	Scott, Laurie
Cansfield, Donna H.	MacLeod, Lisa	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Craitor, Kim	Mauro, Bill	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	McMeekin, Ted	Sorbara, Gregory S.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Tascona, Joseph N.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Watson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Mitchell, Carol	Wong, Tony C.
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Fonseca, Peter	Parsons, Ernie	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard	

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

Nays

Hardeman, Ernie	Marchese, Rosario	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Horwath, Andrea	Martel, Shelley	Prue, Michael
Kormos, Peter	Murdoch, Bill	Tabuns, Peter

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 68; the nays are 9.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): Today the McGuinty government is taking another step in helping to build a culture of conservation in this province. Earlier today I was joined by Peter Love, Ontario's chief conservation officer, to launch Every Kilo-watt Counts, a new campaign that will help Ontario consumers save energy and save money.

Ontarians are well aware that the energy sector is facing a big challenge. We need to bring online over 25,000 megawatts of generation by 2020. Obviously, that's no small feat. We are already bringing on more than 10,000 megawatts of new generation online, with 2,900 megawatts already online.

As we continue to build new generation, we must also invest in conservation. It is cheaper to save a kilowatt than to generate a kilowatt. Beginning this month, consumers will benefit from the Cool Savings rebate program, a part of this new campaign. The conservation bureau has partnered with the Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada and has designed a program that will help reduce peak demand for electricity this summer and reduce overall demand during cooling seasons in years to come.

Consumers who participate in the program will receive a \$500 rebate when they replace an inefficient central air conditioner with a new Energy Star-related unit. Also under this program, there is a \$50 rebate for those who have their air conditioner tuned up, and a \$75 rebate on the supply and installation of a programmable thermostat.

The rebate incentives announced today will be in effect April 21. Rebate coupons will be mailed to every household in Ontario in April and will be redeemable at retailers across the province. This is the first of many consumer-focused programs that the Ministry of Energy and the conservation bureau are working on for the summer of 2006.

I'm pleased to note that today's announcement builds on the government's commitment to building a culture of conservation. We created the conservation bureau. We removed the financial disincentives that local distribution companies had faced when helping customers conserve energy, and the result is that \$160 million has been invested into community-based conservation programs that will be run by local utilities—one of the largest such investments in this province's history. Already, \$34 million worth of conservation programs have been rolled out across this province.

We have also directed the Ontario Power Authority to develop conservation programs to procure up to 1,300 megawatts of conservation and demand-side management, including: up to 500 megawatts of demand response and demand management programs across the province; up to 100 megawatts of conservation for the low-income and social housing sector; up to 100 megawatts to take energy-inefficient appliances out of service and to encourage energy-efficient lighting; up to 150 megawatts in the residential sector and an additional 150 megawatts in the commercial buildings and MUSH sector—the municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals; up to 300 megawatts of conservation and demand-side management programs in the city of Toronto.

We are leading by example. This government is well on its way to achieving its own 10% electricity reduction target at government-owned facilities.

In all, this government has put into motion initiatives and policies that will result in an estimated \$1.5 billion of conservation investment, all in an effort to give the people of Ontario the tools that they need to become a part of the conservation culture of this province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Hon. Rick Bartolucci (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I am very pleased to rise in the House this week to inform members of yet another action by our government to improve the quality of life for northern residents. Last week, I spoke about a number of new initiatives under our northern prosperity plan. They include record-setting infrastructure investments and exciting initiatives to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of our provincial minerals sector.

This past Friday, I was honoured to join Premier Dalton McGuinty in Sudbury and to have my colleagues parliamentary assistant Bill Mauro and MPP Michael Gravelle in Thunder Bay to celebrate the fact that the Northern Ontario School of Medicine bursary fund campaign had raised \$6.7 million.

Our government, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., had previously committed to match funding raised up to \$5 million. The Premier fulfilled that commitment and announced that the government would provide the additional \$1.7 million, thus matching the entire amount. This amount is above and beyond the government's current commitment of \$95.3 million over three years towards the Northern Ontario School of Medicine.

The bursary fund will help students from northern, rural and remote communities with the cost of medical school and help them avoid significant debt at the end of their training. We know that if young people from the north study in the north, there is a good chance they will become doctors in the north.

My northern colleagues and I also know that northerners possess an unparalleled tenacity when they tackle the work at hand. Clearly, that has been the case in the bursary fund campaign. When you consider the relatively short period the campaign has been under way, this is truly an astonishing feat in fundraising. An accomplishment of this magnitude could not have been possible without the participation of many northerners guided by the campaign co-chairs, renowned fundraiser Gerry Lougheed Jr. from northeastern Ontario, who has raised over \$23.5 million for the Sudbury Regional Hospital through the Heart and Soul Campaign, and tenacious Greg Pilot from Thunder Bay.

I would also like to acknowledge the board of directors of the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. Although these women and men represent different constituencies throughout northern Ontario, they understand the importance of our future doctors for the greater collective good of all of northern Ontario.

No institution has captivated the imagination of so many northerners as has the medical school. No institution is winning the hearts of so many northerners as is the medical school. Northerners know that this is more than just simply the first new medical school in Canada in almost 40 years; it is an institution that embodies our collective hopes and dreams for a brighter future.

The bursary fund campaign has been a huge success, but our work is not over. Our government will keep

working with northerners to strengthen the Northern Ontario School of Medicine and improve access to care. It's part of our plan to build prosperity for working families by investing in the health of our people.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Hon. Caroline Di Cocco (Minister of Culture): The entertainment and creative cluster, which includes the film and television industry, is one of the many success stories of our province's diverse economy. We believe we have the right combination of people, expertise, facilities, sites and now the financial incentives to protect Ontario's position as the leading film and television production centre in Canada.

Our province is North America's third-largest employer in the creative industries, after California and New York. Creative industries contributed almost \$10 billion to the provincial economy in 2004, and they are expected to be among the top three growth industries over the next two decades.

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One of the many companies in our entertainment and creative cluster is CORE Feature Animation, a Toronto-based company and leading creator of digital visual effects and animation for feature film and television. I'd like to welcome Bob Munroe, CORE's president and co-founder; John Mariella and Kyle Menzies, vice-presidents and co-founders; as well as Ron Estey, chief financial officer and managing director, who are sitting in the gallery today. I'd like them to stand.

Applause.

Hon. Ms. Di Cocco: Thank you.

Later on today, I will be attending a special preview of the exciting Disney animated feature *The Wild*, made here in Ontario with CORE's creative expertise. Today, CORE is one of the top 10 studios in the world to watch, according to the respected trade publication *3D World* magazine. Over the past decade, the CORE team has been an essential part of over 55 feature films, 50 television series and numerous movies of the week, such as *Dr. Doolittle* and *Siblings*.

Our government recognizes that a strong and sustainable film and television industry is a major contributor to Ontario's economy and quality of life. Film and TV production in Ontario generates \$2 billion per year and accounts for nearly 20,000 jobs. The budget tabled on March 23 demonstrates the Ontario government's determination to maintain and enhance the entertainment and creative cluster under the leadership of Premier McGuinty.

Specifically, we propose:

- to extend the enhanced 18% tax credit for film production services to March 2007;

- to expand eligibility for the Ontario interactive digital media tax credit and increase the tax credit from 20% to 30% for smaller businesses;

- to dedicate \$7.5 million over three years to the entertainment and creative cluster partnerships fund; and finally,

- to give \$23 million to the Ontario Media Development Corp. to lead and implement a development strategy for the entertainment and creative cluster.

The measures which the government has undertaken demonstrate our commitment to maintain and enhance the film and television industry leadership.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Responses?

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):

It's my pleasure to respond to the statement by the Minister of Energy. Earlier today at the press conference, I actually said that I thought the government was taking a step in a positive direction with their announcement today. Under closer examination, I have to say that I want to withdraw some of that support.

There's no question about it; we have to do what we can to reduce energy usage in this province. But this announcement, when I see a lot of the details, is kind of a closed-club announcement. We have all kinds of air-conditioning installers in this province who are not members of the HRAC. This is not a consumer rebate. Only if a member contractor installs your air conditioner are you going to be eligible for that, and only if a contractor installs a \$75 programmable thermostat—you can buy them for less now—are you going to get the rebate. Install a \$75 thermostat for \$300 and you get a rebate. I've installed these thermostats myself; they are not complicated.

We have to actually ask ourselves if we're doing something for consumers here or if the government, in concert with their conservation czar, Mr. Peter Love—who incidentally has done pretty good for a guy who wrote a report last year that basically told us we're using too much power. That was a revelation. But at 300K plus a year, not too bad. The government is giving him a good paycheque for the work he's doing, no question about that.

But as to these air conditioners they're talking about, they raised the standards for the seasonal energy efficiency rating from 10 to 13. Manufacturers have now produced a lot of these at SEER 13, but the rebate only comes into play if you're installing a SEER 14. I spoke to one wholesaler today who has already had orders cancelled for over half a million dollars of air conditioners because they're SEER 13, not 14. So you have to ask yourself, when they devise these plans, who are they talking to?

Getting back to the big picture, there's no question about it, we've got to reduce the amount, the use of power where we can. We've got to do it. But why has the government got itself into this mess? You need only have listened to Adam White at the AMPCO breakfast yesterday. They've created a power crisis because they're intent on shutting down enough power in this province to

supply electricity to almost two million homes. When you decide you're going to cut off the power to two million homes, you're going to have a crisis. We'll see what kind of a crisis they're creating tomorrow when they release their new pricing in this province.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): I'm responding to the announcement made by the Minister of Culture. First of all, on behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I welcome the members of CORE Animation to the Legislature and commend you for the contribution you make to the industry and to our province.

To the new minister, congratulations for the commitment you have made to the film industry following the leadership of the previous government in setting up tax credits. Last year, it was only after the pressure of a news conference with members of the film industry by our leader, John Tory, that this government remembered its promise to increase tax credits.

To those members of the entertainment and creative cluster, congratulations on today's recognition of your important contributions to our society and our economy.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): I wish to respond to the announcement made by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. I think we can both be proud of the investment we've made in the northern medical school. Our government announced it in 2001. This week the Honourable Tony Clement was able to move forward and officially open the research labs that had been committed to by the previous Liberal government. So I think when it comes to the northern medical school, we identified the need, we announced it, we moved forward and I'm very pleased that you are continuing to support the school.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): Today the Pembina Institute released their report, A Quick-Start Energy-Efficiency Strategy for Ontario, and it's an excellent report. It talks about how we can reduce electricity consumption by 4,500 megawatts by the year 2012. It lists all the practical things that could be done and points out that these things are being done in fact in California, Vermont, New York, and they're being done now in Manitoba and Quebec. It's a wonderful report.

This wonderful report was followed by a rather dim press conference by the Minister of Energy, where all she could announce for energy efficiency was \$15 million. Did it come anywhere close to California or New England or even what they're doing in Manitoba or Quebec? Nowhere. It was a confused and confusing announcement about central air conditioning.

Here is the real McGuinty energy policy: \$40 billion for mega nuclear plants and \$15 million for energy-efficient air conditioners. That tells the whole story. This is a government that is about mega nuclear and mega natural gas plants. The only interest they have in energy efficiency and conservation is to hold these empty press conferences. This is an energy efficiency strategy by the Pembina Institute. What we heard today from the Minister of Energy was a sad, sad, oh, so sad imitation.

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NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): I want to talk to the Minister of Northern Development. I wonder if he knows what's happening across northern Ontario. There are a thousand manufacturing jobs killed by the McGuinty government in Thunder Bay. There is a state-of-the-art Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay to build rapid transit equipment, but is the Ottawa contract going to the Bombardier plant? No. The McGuinty government is going to send it to California or to Germany. Terrace Bay is literally shut down as a result of McGuinty government electricity rates; Red Rock, literally shut down; the mill in Kenora, shut down; the mill in Dryden, which was one of the most modern paper mills in North America and has had over \$1 billion of new investment in the last eight years, virtually shut down by the McGuinty government.

Minister, doctors are leaving northern Ontario; they're leaving those communities. Do you know why? Because they see the community leaving. Do you know what's really embarrassing about this? Most of those paper mills are within 10 or 20 kilometres of a hydro dam that provides electricity at two cents a kilowatt hour. Yet the McGuinty government policy says that those paper mills have to pay 8 cents a kilowatt hour for electricity that's produced down the road at two cents a kilowatt hour.

You have the audacity to stand here and try to tell people that something wonderful is happening in the economy in northern Ontario. You should read the AMPCO report. The AMPCO report is very clear: The McGuinty policy of driving hydro rates through the roof is going to eliminate paper mill after paper mill in northern Ontario. After that, it's going to eliminate the mineral sector, the mining sector and the refining sector. Why? Because they can't afford to pay eight cents a kilowatt hour for their electricity. They will move to Quebec, they will move to Manitoba, they will move to British Columbia. They'll even move to the United States.

That's what the McGuinty government is doing to the northern Ontario economy. You are killing it every day as you kill thousands of jobs.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina): I want to congratulate all of the cultural workers in the film in-

dustry for having led a successful and aggressive campaign to persuade the government that a strong and sustainable film and television industry is a major contributor to Ontario's economy and quality of life.

I want to remind this minister about another promise the Liberals made:

"Within the first two years of our mandate, this council will produce a report on the status of the artist in Ontario in the 21st century. This report will be used to develop status of the artist legislation for our artists in Ontario, following the successful lead of both Quebec and Saskatchewan."

I want to say to the minister that we're close to the third year and we're still waiting.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo): My question is for the Acting Premier. Your minister said that the information on the website was reliable and up to date. We hear today from the member for Perth–Middlesex that it is not. Who are people in the province of Ontario to believe? Who are they to trust: your member or your minister?

The one thing they do know is that they can't trust your government to keep its promises. You have not been able to reduce your wait times. Can you explain to the people in Mississauga–Halton why they're paying more and getting less in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario? Can you explain why the wait times for cancer surgeries have risen by 28% since July, from 75 to 96 days at Credit Valley Hospital?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to compliment the member from Perth–Middlesex—

Interjections.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: Oh, they're off to a good start when John Tory's not around. He's probably out trying to stake out a campaign office in my riding to run against me.

The reality is that the honourable member from Perth–Middlesex has taken an initiative, one which I think anyone should be encouraged to take. He called his local hospital because yesterday noise was made about wait times, and the local hospital provided him with information, which they've also supplied to the ministry, which will be coming online, because we're updating the information every couple of months. We believe it's appropriate that, as a government, we've invested in the development of a system that actually gives information to patients, because we inherited a circumstance where that wasn't possible.

The results are quite impressive. On cataract surgery, the six-month trend shows almost a consistent double-digit decrease: 21 days; hip replacement, province-wide double-digit decrease: 23 days; knee replacement, provincial double-digit decrease: 25 days. Of course, across the breadth of Ontario, we have more work to do—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Supplementary?

Mrs. Witmer: I ask the minister, who are we to trust? The reality is you have put ads in newspapers. The newspapers tell people to go to your website in order to determine the wait times. We now learned today from your member that the website is not reliable. It is not up to date. So why are you spending thousands of taxpayer dollars?

I ask you today, why have cancer surgery wait times at Toronto East General Hospital jumped 35%, from 51 to 69 days?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I think the people of the province of Ontario should believe data. They should believe reliable data. The reality is that that party, which is now capable of a bit of noise, on this subject was not capable of a bit of action. We inherited a circumstance where, as an example, the Ontario health care system did not have the capacity to measure how many cancer surgeries it provided. So we put this information on a database, on a website. Every two months, it's updated, and there will be a subsequent update coming.

One of the points that I made yesterday that the honourable member didn't like to hear was that we're putting a lot of heat on our hospitals to address those people who have been waiting the longest. Accordingly, because our system measures the waits of those who have just had their surgeries completed, sometimes the data is going to bounce around and, in a certain sense, maybe I can't make the honourable member understand it, but it's good news that we're reaching out to those who have had the longest waits. Appreciable distinctions and limitations, lower times for waiting—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mrs. Witmer: The reality is, the website is not reliable; the website is not up to date. People in this province are being asked through ads to refer to the website, but it's not a reliable site of information.

You have broken your promise to reduce wait times, and you haven't responded to any of the questions that we have asked today. I ask you one more time: Explain to the people in the city of Toronto why wait times for cancer surgeries have gone up at Mount Sinai Hospital by 8%, from 144 to 155 days, according to your website, and at the University Health Network by 13%, from 69 to 78 days. That's what it says on your website. Can we believe it or not?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: It seems like the honourable member has been spending a little too much time beside her seatmate, who has a bit of propensity to suck and blow. This is what we're into a little bit in this circumstance. The member starts with the assertion that the

information is not reliable, and then she quotes it. So I think this is a bit of a challenge.

As I explained to the honourable member, and as I'm happy to say to constituents of mine who are relying on some of the hospitals that were mentioned, we have asked our hospitals in Ontario to focus their resources especially on those who are waiting the longest. I believe this is appropriate. Because the wait time system that we have measures those patients who have just had their surgeries completed, I think that it's, in a certain sense, very good news that we're getting to those who have had to wait longer. All of the trend lines across the breadth of these are down, as I indicated: on knee replacement, on hip replacement, on cataracts. Our cancer radiation rates are down by 16%.

I want to say that the honourable member's comments diminish the work that's being done on the front line by hospitals, by CEOs and especially by front-line providers like doctors and—

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The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie—Lincoln): A question to the Deputy Premier: As you know, cancer is likely Ontario's most deadly disease. Every member here in the assembly has probably, sadly, lost a member of their family or a close friend to cancer. Dalton McGuinty, during the election campaign, promised to reduce cancer wait times. When we look at your own government website we see, for example, that patients in Glanbrook, Grimsby, Stoney Creek—throughout Hamilton—that try to access cancer surgery at St. Joseph's Hospital have now seen an increase of 35% in their wait times, from 54 days to 73 days. How is it possible that Dalton McGuinty made a solemn promise to cancer patients and now breaks that promise?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I think it's easy for the honourable member today to stand in his place and ask questions about cancer surgeries, because for the first time in Ontario there's actually information which is available to the people of the province. Across the breadth of that data collection, you can cherry-pick some numbers. The reality is that 92% of all cancer surgeries are being completed in accordance with our guidelines—that is, with the pan-Canadian benchmarks which we signed on to—and health care providers—our nurses and our doctors—on the front lines of health care are involved in a mission which I think is not appropriately run down by the honourable member.

We inherited from him, and from his time in office, a system in Ontario that could not even measure the number of cancer surgeries that were being provided, much less how quickly they were being provided. I remind the honourable member one more time what I've said a couple of times now: Our system measures those who are leaving the system, who have had their surgeries completed. If these numbers are higher, it's exactly because we've instructed the hospitals in the province to—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hudak: If the minister were to look at his own website, were to look across the board in the Hamilton-Niagara area, he would see that for cancer surgery wait times are up across the board. I mentioned St. Joseph's Healthcare—up some 35%. Hamilton Health Sciences is up some 38%, from 48 days to 64 days. I ask the minister, when we see all the hospitals across Hamilton-Niagara increasing wait times for cancer surgery, does this mean that you simply have dropped Hamilton-Niagara patients off the radar screen, or is it a mess right across the province of Ontario?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: What it means, and apparently it's a bit of a struggle for the front bench over there, is that we have created in Ontario so far the capacity to measure the surgical wait time for those people who have had their surgery completed and who have exited the health care system. That these numbers are higher is a reflection on the fact that until now the health care system in Ontario has not been aligned in a fashion that it could respond to those individuals who were waiting the longest. Accordingly, I do say to the honourable member that I look forward to the opportunity to discuss with him after subsequent updates of the data. When he sees that the backlog of addressing those that have waited the longest has cleared, we will see significant movement.

These numbers can change for a variety of reasons. Due to scheduling in a hospital, the Christmas season impacted some numbers. The reality is that we have a system in Ontario that measures results in a way that, when we inherited from that government, they couldn't tell us how many cancer surgeries were performed.

Mr. Hudak: I would say to the minister, with all due respect, in the third year of his mandate these kind of answers are cold comfort to a senior citizen suffering from cancer in Glanbrook. They're cold comfort to a single mother in Port Colborne waiting for increasing lengths of time for her cancer surgery. I'll point out to you again that, for example, the Niagara Health System has seen an increase in their cancer wait times, under the McGuinty government's measurements, of 13%. Minister, these are your own numbers. What's most upsetting is that Dalton McGuinty looked into the camera and he made campaign promises to families who have members suffering from cancer. Now, some three years later, we're seeing an increase in these waiting times. Dalton McGuinty clearly made a promise he had no intention of keeping. What are you going to do to reduce these wait times? Please tell me that Hamilton and Niagara have not dropped off your radar screen.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member asked the question starting, "With all due respect," and I say to you with all due respect, you're part of a party whose leader looked into the cameras and told Ontarians, "It is not our plan to close hospitals." Instead, we all know what your cruel record has been with respect to hospital closures.

The honourable member wants to talk about Niagara. I'll talk about a government that's delivering to Niagara,

alongside the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, a new hospital and a new regional cancer centre. I'll talk about a province that responded to the circumstances of Niagara wanting to control its land ambulance by providing them with \$30 million over five years to be able to do just that. I'll talk about a government that's moving forward with the development of community health centres, family health teams and palliative care capacity that this province has never seen. These are the record of our commitment to the people of Hamilton and Niagara.

One more point: I urge the honourable member to stand in his place every two months, after every update of these numbers, so that we can carry—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Be seated, Minister. Sit down. Thank you.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Yesterday the Catholic Children's Aid Society admitted that it failed Jeffrey Baldwin, the five-year-old boy who died of abuse after that CAS placed him in the care of his grandparents who were convicted child abusers. The executive director of the Catholic Children's Aid Society said, "This tragedy has presented us with a very powerful lesson of what can go wrong. It was the worst outcome that can happen if you don't have the safeguards in place," and she called it "a collective blind spot for child welfare agencies and the courts."

Minister, in Ontario, we have someone whose job it is too investigate the failure of government services and to improve government services for everyone. That's the Ombudsman's office. My question is this: Why is the McGuinty government trying to muzzle the Ombudsman's office? Why are you stopping him from having investigative oversight of what happens at children's aid societies?

Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services): The member asked this question yesterday, so let me repeat my response. First of all, this case is still in fact before the courts. As a former Attorney General, he should understand that it would be entirely inappropriate for a minister of this government to comment on that case, but I can tell you that I am very pleased the coroner has moved immediately to start an inquest into this tragedy. I think it's really important that we recognize this case to be a tragedy, not an opportunity.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, this is about all the other children out there who need protection. That's what the Ombudsman is asking for. He's saying that in virtually every other province in this country, the provincial Ombudsman has independent investigative authority to look at the activities and failures of children's aid societies, and that is the question. Ontario children deserve protection. The Ombudsman is pointing out that under the McGuinty government, Ontario children are actually

falling behind. They're not getting the same level of protection as children in other provinces.

Minister, I'm not asking you to comment on the instant case. This is about whether or not Ontario's Ombudsman is going to have the independent investigative oversight authority of children's aid societies in this province. I ask you again, yes or no?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: The Ombudsman in this province is in fact going to have jurisdiction beyond what he has had before as result of a bill introduced by our government, Bill 210, which was approved by this Legislature last month. As a result of some of the objectives of that bill, there will be greater accountability on the part of children's aid societies. There will be a smoother, stronger and more objective complaint mechanism and an independent arm's-length body, the Child and Family Services Review Board, to review, and the Ombudsman has jurisdiction over that Child and Family Services Review Board. All of that is going to be put in place as a result of what our government is doing to provide protection to vulnerable children in this province.

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Mr. Hampton: Minister, you know that the Ombudsman says that what you've set up doesn't have investigative power, that it doesn't really provide independent oversight, that it won't protect our children. Here's the record of Ontario's Ombudsman: A year ago, he called the Ministry of Children and Youth Services the ministry of "I don't know" after countless families were forced to give up custody of their special-needs children to children's aid societies in order to get services. He said your ministry was rife with "acute government maladministration" and was "wilfully blind" to severely disabled children in crisis.

Minister, is that what the McGuinty government is afraid of? Are you afraid that if the Ombudsman receives the authority for independent investigative oversight of CASSs, he'll point out that children's aid societies in this province are underfunded, underresourced and overworked, and children are being left at risk? Is that what the McGuinty government is really afraid of?

Hon. Mrs. Chambers: Our government has every confidence in the coroner. In fact, the coroner wrote to me in January 2006 and said,

"I do not agree with Mr. Marin that there is absolutely no oversight from any organization over children's aid societies...."

"You will note I am making no comment about reviews of children's aid societies where a death does not occur, because that is not within our mandate. The main purpose of my letter is to ensure you that there is a proper process already in existence.... I am presently involved in meetings with officials from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies and several individual children's aid societies to discuss ways that our death investigation process can be further enhanced. I am encouraged by the progress of these discussions."

That's from Ontario's chief coroner.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Energy. I'd just point out to the Minister of Children and Youth Services that coroners' inquests happen after children die.

Can the Minister of Energy please explain how it is that the McGuinty government has \$40 billion for mega nuclear plants, but you could only find \$15 million today for energy efficiency and conservation?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for the question. I would like to correct something, though, that was said earlier by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. In fact, you do not have to be an HRAC member. You have to be a registered contractor. I think that's a really important point to get out.

In terms of what the member has indicated, obviously the member wasn't listening, because I said it's \$1.5 billion worth of conservation initiatives across the province. This is only the beginning. Of course, this is for the residential, the in-house air conditioning, but in addition to this, Cool Shops has another program that actually deals with the window air conditioners on top of this. So there's no question we are moving forward and we have invested a significant amount in energy—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: The record speaks for itself. We know the McGuinty government is sitting on top of their \$40-billion nuclear announcement, yet today all they have to announce for energy efficiency is a slender \$15 million.

Minister, this is a report by the Pembina Institute. It shows how in a few short years you could reduce electricity consumption by 4,500 megawatts. That's the equivalent of another Darlington nuclear station. They actually draw you a map on the practical things that you could implement and the kinds of things that would result in real energy efficiency and real reduction in energy consumption.

My question again: How is it that the McGuinty government has \$40 billion for costly, unreliable and environmentally risky nuclear power, but you can only find \$15 million today for energy efficiency?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I will reiterate, it's \$1.5 billion. We'll get this right yet. They haven't quite been able to figure it out.

I'm absolutely delighted to hear that the member of the third party has become a convert to conservation, because he cut virtually every program in this province. So we have put it back in. You got rid of it, we put it back in, and we're going to make a difference by keeping the lights on for the people of Ontario and by providing them with the tools that they need in order to manage and conserve their energy costs and their energy needs as we move forward.

There is no question that we have lots to do. It's an exciting opportunity, as we move forward, working with people like the heating and air-conditioning folks, who

over the last few months helped us put in place a remarkable program, along with the Toronto Atmospheric Fund, along with some of the suggestions out of the Pembina, along with the Clean Air Alliance. It is fantastic, the things that we are going to do as we move forward to make a difference for the people of Ontario by changing—

The Speaker: Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Hampton: Minister, I want to read you a quote. This was in 1992: "Ontario cannot afford these energy efficiency programs." Do you know who that was? It was the Liberal energy critic of the day, one Dalton McGuinty. And do you know what? It looks as if under the McGuinty government, once again, the McGuinty government doesn't believe that Ontario can afford energy efficiency programs.

You've had three years now, and we still don't see an energy efficiency strategy. You have raised hydro rates twice. You've killed 100,000 good manufacturing and forestry jobs. And you've got virtually every stakeholder out there who's concerned about energy saying, "You're on the wrong track."

My question today, once again, is, you can find only \$15 million for energy efficiency today, yet we know you've got \$40 billion for unreliable, expensive and environmentally risky nuclear power—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: That gentleman from Kenora–Rainy River can huff and puff all he likes, but we are moving forward on conservation in this province. It doesn't make a hill of beans what he thinks over there, because we are actually going to make a difference: \$1.5 billion—\$15 million today, \$10 million the other day; 100 megawatts, 300 just for Toronto alone. We are making a difference.

Maybe that's the part he really doesn't like: We actually are making a difference, when in fact that previous government made no difference, because they cancelled everything—the Beck tunnel, Conawapa, conservation—and in fact did more damage. We wouldn't be in half the pickle we're in if they had done their job in the first place.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Cameron Jackson (Burlington): My question is for the Minister of Health. A lot has been said about the two types of wait-time lists that we have in our province, the one that has been captured by your strategy, but I know that all members of this House have examples of families and individuals who are caught outside of the protection of the wait-time strategy.

Three of my constituents—Shawn Milne has been waiting for almost two years for important spine surgery. It's been cancelled. In fact, last week he was prepped, gowned, I'ved and in the operating room, and it was cancelled for the third time. Scott Carmody has been waiting over a year—he's been told he's got 20 more months to wait—and Carolyn Wilkins has been waiting

15 months for her spinal surgery. Each of these has left their jobs, each of them is having their benefits package run out and each one is on a daily regimen of painkillers.

Minister, what comfort can you give to those thousands of patients who are on growing waiting lists that are not part your current strategy?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): First off, I'd like to offer to the honourable member the view that with respect to the first case he raised, I think this is a matter that should be very directly pursued with the hospital. I think that over a period of time in the health care system in Ontario, this late-in-the-day cancellation of surgery has become too much the norm. One of the things we have done, which seems small in the grand scheme of things but which has been impactful, is that we surveyed hospitals and said, "How many of you are starting your surgical day on time?" Astonishingly, 29% of them indicated that they didn't always do it. There are lessons that we learn from the wait-times work that are applied more broadly across the piece.

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Secondly, with respect to orthopaedic surgery, we have a real challenge in the small number of surgeons that we have. I won't get into the issue of doctor training at this point because I've covered that ground before. We're working very hard to put resources in the health care system that can effectively deliver additional volumes of these sorts of surgeries. I'd be very happy to work on an individual basis, through my staff, with the honourable member to see what assistance might be available for those patients. But we strive, of course, to reduce wait times everywhere.

Mr. Jackson: In the first case that I shared with the minister, the head trauma case came in the front door, and that's why they scrubbed this operation. The fact of the matter is, our hospital budgets are so tightly knit that hospitals lack the flexibility to perform these services in a timely manner. So when you say you would like to offer some assistance, I can tell you that this is a feature which is becoming more prevalent in hospitals located in the GTA-905 area, partially because we have no funding formula that acknowledges high growth. My own hospital, Joseph Brant hospital, received a scant \$100,000 to recognize their entire year's efficiency and their entire year's growth on a \$120-million budget. Frankly, we have 10 operating rooms in our hospital, and only five were operational last year.

Minister, as little as \$1 million would open our sixth or seventh operating room in Joe Brant. So I ask you, are you willing to look seriously—

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: There were many questions in the honourable member's minute. On the issue of growth in particular, I think there are areas of our province—there's growth occurring in a lot of places, including here in downtown Toronto. But in many areas of the 905 and other areas of the province, obviously that has been more exaggerated. This is an issue at the moment on

which my deputy minister is in discussion with members of the hospital community in the 905 area.

But I do think the honourable member really needs to fess up on two points. First is to acknowledge that some of the challenges we have are not about money at all but about critical shortcomings with respect to health human resources. This is something that bears the stamp of his government. Second is the overall fiscal mandate of hospitals. We've increased their funding this year by about \$600 million. The honourable member is part of a party that promises a \$2.6-billion cut to health care. Accordingly, I'm not really sure what foundation he has for a question of that nature.

TOWING INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Acting Premier: Today's newspapers paint a picture of a tow truck industry that has been infiltrated by outlaw biker gang members and organized criminals. What's the McGuinty government prepared to do to regulate this industry to protect the public?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): To the Attorney General.

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I think that certainly the criminal justice system has an extremely important role to play. I never thought of it in terms of regulating the industry, but certainly they have an important role to play to ensure that organized crime has absolutely no place in the province of Ontario. That's why we expanded the guns and gangs task force. That's why we have put expert crown attorneys working together with the joint task force to fight biker gangs. That's why we did as much by having expert prosecutors join up with the task force to fight organized crime.

All that expansion was even before the \$51-million expansion of our crime-fighting capacity announced by the Premier in January. This will mean that police officers, prosecutors and, in addition to that, technology will be made available so that we can become even more organized in our justice system than organized crime itself.

Mr. Kormos: Please, sir, I'm talking about the shocking revelations of organized crime, criminals, outlaw biker gang members infiltrating the tow truck industry. The status quo as it is right now in Toronto, for instance, is that a person convicted of a sexual assault, a person convicted of trafficking drugs or a person convicted of trafficking firearms could apply for and receive a tow truck licence. There's nothing that stops members of organized criminal groups from operating a tow truck. We say that that's not acceptable. What are you and your government going to do about it?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: Again, I know the member doesn't want to suggest for a moment that we ought not to have total confidence in our police services across this province, and in particular in the province-wide anti-biker gang unit and anti-organized crime unit headed up by the OPP.

Last year, we provided specific prosecutors in order to permit the police, to assist the police, like never before, in cracking down on all organized crime activity. In addition to that, this government is using the civil forfeiture legislation that is in place to seize the proceeds of unlawful activities. This has meant that we are able to forfeit a crack house operation that was operating in Hamilton. This has meant that we've been able to seize through the civil courts and provide to victims of crime more than \$2 million in assets and \$10 million in total before the courts right now. I can assure the member that I have perfect and total confidence that our police service and organized crime service is—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa—Orléans): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The Ontario Pharmacists' Association has said that patients would benefit greatly from an enhanced role for pharmacists in our health care system. Minister, do you agree with that assessment?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think one of the things that many members have had the privilege of commenting on over a period of time is the acknowledgement that pharmacists are important front-line health care providers. We've seen them over time orienting themselves much more toward their capacity to assist patients, not just in an across-the-counter way, but also with some of the consultation rooms that have been built. We see an increasing number of our citizens, as they age, of course relying on, taking advantage of, benefiting from pharmaceutical product, and accordingly it's crucial that we have someone who can help to assist and guide them in that.

We're very supportive of the idea that we do a better job of acknowledging the capacity of our pharmacists on the front lines of health care to be a broader part of the circle of care and to be more involved and engaged in helping our patients to achieve the very best results. So accordingly, we're very much in accordance with the views of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association.

Mr. McNeely: Would the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care be able to give us some specific examples of how pharmacists might be able to benefit patients while also saving the government money?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: I think that for many observers of health care, they would see the opportunities and challenges related to chronic disease management as one we should focus on. We know that many people in our communities who struggle with challenges like diabetes and asthma would also benefit from a circle of care, including doctors and pharmacists who can assist them in managing their circumstances better.

Accordingly, we're very much interested in the idea that we move well beyond the idea of silos to circles of care that can assist our patients with appropriate guidance in the use of medications. This has tremendous benefits

for the patients and is also very helpful for the health care system in terms of utilization of things like emergency rooms. It's our goal to do the best we can to support those patients with challenges, and accordingly, medication management and the important role that pharmacists can play in assisting people is one of the most crucial opportunities we have before us in health care today.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Acting Premier. I would hope you're well aware of what's taking place in the auto sector. We're seeing re-negotiations take place. We're seeing a sell-off of GMAC, which certainly adds a question to what's taking place in the auto sector. Can you explain why your government removed the tax-free exemption for ethanol? Oshawa produces the E85 Impala, which, for those who don't understand, runs on 85% ethanol—hence the name E85—which is over 60% less polluting than any electric hybrid that is now produced in the world; not only that, but the fuel companies that use ethanol as an oxidizing agent, as opposed to, say, MTBE, which seriously pollutes the environment, are being unfairly punished, let alone the impact on water quality. Acting Premier, effectively what you've done is hurt Ontario's auto manufacturers for selling, in Ontario, a world-leading, environmentally friendly vehicle. Why have you done this?

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): First of all, let me address the automotive industry in Ontario. This government has invested \$1.4 billion and leveraged \$6 billion in new investment in the automotive sector. Since we took office, the automotive sector in Ontario has surpassed Michigan to become the largest in North America, and Ward's Auto predicts it will continue to grow and continue to remain number one because of our productive workforce and because of this government's investments.

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I'll remind the member opposite that his party refused assistance to the automotive industry at a time when every jurisdiction in the United States was doing it. When we came to office, we redressed that. That's why there's new investment in Windsor. That's why there's new investment in Oakville. That's why there's new investment in Bramalea. That's why there's new investment in Oshawa. That's why Ontario's number one and that's why tens of thousands of Ontarians can rely on a healthy, profitable automotive industry in the years to come.

Mr. Ouellette: The auto sector stands up and says what you've done with the hybrid electrics was a slap in the face. What's taking place now is that you've increased and doubled the tax exemption for hybrid electrics. Minister, there are no hybrid electrics produced in the province of Ontario—not until 2009. Why would you do that? You refused to answer the question on ethanol.

What you've done is slapped the automotive industry in the face and said it's that not producing equality when it's producing a world leader with the E85, which is far more environmentally friendly than any other hybrid electric currently being produced. Why would you enact two policies now that work against the auto sector?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: (1) I'll just remind the member that his party proposed the same thing in legislation and passed it.

(2) The automotive industry in fact asked for it. The Ford Motor Co., Oakville, wanted it. You had it in your last budget, my friend. You ought to check that. You voted for it.

(3) Where's the ethanol money? In agreement with the entire ethanol community, including farms and everyone else, it's going into the ethanol strategy fund, which is funding the building of new ethanol plants to help our rural communities and to get cars on to ethanol.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Stop the clock. I need the member for Simcoe North to withdraw that last remark.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: Sarnia, Windsor, eastern Ontario—this province has an ethanol strategy. The industry agreed that we should use that tax money to invest in the ethanol strategy.

It's a shame you oppose the farming community. It's a shame you won't stand up for your constituents. It's a shame you don't talk to the auto industry, because they were pleased. You know what? I met with the Ford Motor Co., who are going to be producing a hybrid in Oakville. We're pleased to encourage them, and we're pleased to assist the farm community, which Mr. Dunlop consistently stands up against and opposes. You should be ashamed—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, Minister of Finance.
New question.

COLORECTAL CANCER

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Health. This morning, the Canadian Cancer Society released a special report on cancer rates which showed that colorectal cancer deaths could be reduced by 17% if 70% of Canadians between the ages of 50 and 74 were screened every two years. Colorectal cancer is now the second leading cause of cancer in Ontario; 3,000 Ontarians died from it last year, even though the cancer is 90% treatable if detected early through screening. Minister, in the last election your party promised a screening program for colorectal cancer. When will you deliver on that?

Hon. George Smitherman (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I've had the privilege of speaking on

this subject and participating quite recently with Dr. Terry Sullivan from Cancer Care Ontario.

We do agree as a government that a colorectal cancer screening program is an important priority. It's a very good opportunity, frankly, to provide the support that people need to be able to save lives. It's as obvious as that. Accordingly, we're in the midst of finalizing our analysis of a pilot program that Cancer Care Ontario ran for us. I can confirm for the honourable member, although I don't have a date at present, that we will be moving forward with this program and that Ontario plans to stay at the forefront on this file. It's important to note for all members listening in that this is an opportunity that no other province has had the chance so far to be seized of, but Ontario's planning to be a leader in this area. I look forward to having a chance to share more details with the honourable member soon.

Ms. Martel: The Canadian Cancer Society said today, "It's crucial for the Ontario government to implement a provincial colorectal screening program immediately." Peter Goodhand, the CEO for the Ontario division of the Canadian Cancer Society, said, "The sooner the government gets moving on this, the more lives will be saved."

We know that Cancer Care Ontario made a recommendation to the ministry for a provincially based, province-wide screening program for colorectal cancer. My question again today is the same as it was two weeks ago: When can we expect this government to live up to its promise?

Hon. Mr. Smitherman: The honourable member would know that before you can move forward with a program, it's very important to actually have developed it. Accordingly, it's appropriate that the policy work, which is ongoing at the moment, be completed well. I'm very interested in moving this program forward, but I'm also very interested in making sure that we have an appropriate plan developed that will guide it. This is of course necessary, as the investment of dollars must be done in a fashion which works well for our accountabilities to taxpayers.

We're treating this as a priority. I can confirm one more time for the honourable member that, as relates to colorectal screening, Ontario plans to be a leading jurisdiction in the land, and I accordingly look forward to the opportunity to participate with her in announcements soon.

JUNIOR HOCKEY

HOCKEY JUNIOR

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, as we all know, Canada was selected as the host for the 2009 World Junior Hockey Championship. It is a chance for Canadians to cheer our best hockey players as they take on the world.

Two Ontario cities submitted their bids to host the games. I strongly believe that the city of Ottawa is the

best candidate. Our national capital region is a unique area in which you'll find a community rich with love of sports and culture. It showcases the best of English and French heritage, culture and day-to-day living. As such, Ottawa serves as a model for many other Canadian cities.

Ce serait un grand honneur pour la région de la capitale nationale que d'être l'hôte de ce prestigieux tournoi. Comment notre gouvernement supporte-t-il ces candidatures?

L'hon. Jim Watson (ministre de la Promotion de la santé): Je suis très fier que l'Ontario a deux villes qui ont posé leur candidature pour le tournoi de 2009.

I'm very pleased that Ontario has two dynamic applicants for the World Junior Hockey Championship and that we're going to be able to cheer on Team Canada in 2009 in this country.

Both Ottawa and Toronto are bidding for the 2009 championships, and our government has given unprecedented support to both of those bids. In fact, Premier McGuinty has spoken directly with Hockey Canada, and this Easter weekend I will be travelling to Calgary to support both the Ottawa and the Toronto bids.

It might be of interest to the House to know that this particular tournament has great economic generation for the province. BC held the games last year, and it was an estimated \$41 million into the economy. More than that, it's an opportunity to showcase two great hockey cities in our province, and we're very proud of both applicants.

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Member for Scarborough Centre.

Mr. Brad Duguid (Scarborough Centre): It's great to know that our government is supporting the two bids equally next week in Calgary, but the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and our hockey coach here in the Legislature have got it all wrong. As the world-renowned hotbed of hockey, Toronto is unquestionably the best candidate city to host the 2009 world juniors.

With the Toronto Maple Leafs' playoff hopes potentially fading away this evening, Ottawa fans may be breathing a sigh of relief. They may have a shot at the cup this time because they may not need to face the Leafs in the playoffs. But the people of Toronto also deserve some good news on the hockey front. Nothing would remove us from our hockey doldrums more than the confirmation from Calgary that Toronto will be hosting the 2009 world juniors.

Minister, Ontario is a great location for such international events. What are you doing to attract more of these world-class events to our province in the future?

Hon. Mr. Watson: I thank the honourable member for Scarborough Centre and I know his passion for the game of hockey. In fact, in this province there are over 360,000 minor league hockey players, coaches and officials. Any town or village in this great province can lay claim to the phrase "Hockeyville," because it's in our blood; we're passionate about it.

As a result of going through the bidding process and working with both Toronto and Ottawa, we realized that this province needs a sport-hosting policy, because we

need to bring greater coordination in our efforts; we want to make sure that those cities and towns that are bidding on various sporting activities have the resources at hand both from their local municipality and also from the province of Ontario. The sport hosting policy has been adopted by this government.

I also want to wish the very best to both Toronto and Ottawa. We look forward to the results from Hockey Canada as they announce it on May 15. We would very much welcome the 2009 junior championships right here in Ontario.

1510

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke): We all know that Barry's Bay is Hockeyville.

Anyway, my question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, despite the promise that your party made to freeze electricity rates at 4.3 cents, we've seen them rise almost 35% under your watch. Yesterday, Adam White from AMPCO gave a very good presentation of what is going to happen to electricity rates under your electricity plan. Because of your irresponsible and, quite frankly, foolish promise to shut down 6,500 megawatts—enough to power two million homes in this province—you people have put us into a crisis. When we put these two things together, Minister, we are going to see huge price increases in this province, increased imports for this province, because of your plan. When are you simply going to admit that you were wrong? It is time to revisit it. We can burn clean in this province—much cleaner than the Germans are doing, the Danes are doing. It is time to revisit your plan and admit to Ontarians that you have been wrong. You have tried to fool them, and this is going to lead to exorbitant prices in this province.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield (Minister of Energy): I thank the member for his question. I did receive the information. I'm in the process of reading the report. As you have already heard in the newspaper, there certainly is quite a difference of opinion between the Ontario Power Authority and what the report already indicates from AMPCO's study.

But really I find this very fascinating. This is a large industrial group that receives \$800 million in rebates. Let me repeat that: \$800 million in rebates. So actually what they really want is a competitive—

Mr. Yakabuski: Say it one more time, Donna; I didn't catch that.

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: That's \$800 million. So what they really want is, they want energy prices frozen but they want a competitive market. I think that's inhaling and exhaling. So let's wait and see what this report says. That's going to take a—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary? The member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question regards the same study mentioned by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. However, I'd like to direct my

question to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade or the Deputy Premier.

The Speaker: No, it's to the same minister.

Mr. Chudleigh: The same minister. It'll be the same answer anyway, so that doesn't matter, I suppose.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I can wait.

The member for Halton.

Mr. Chudleigh: To the Minister of Energy: It seems there's a tremendous conflict over there between your direction, Minister, with your policies in the energy field, where we're seeing thousands of jobs being destroyed in the steel industry, in the pulp and paper industry, in the chemical industry and in the manufacturing sector, as outlined in the study done by the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario. As many as 100,000 jobs and \$16 billion a year in real GDP could be in jeopardy if the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade can't get their policies and their plans correct for the people of Ontario. Minister, I want to ask you: Which minister is going to step up to bat at the cabinet table and try to save these core industries of Ontario that have become far too vulnerable on your government's watch?

Hon. Mrs. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question. Ontario's economy is strong. Last month alone, it created 31,200 net new jobs. In addition, that 11,000 megawatts of new supply over the next five years that we've brought into this province is \$11.5 billion worth of new investment in the electrical sector alone. That's over 90,000 person years of employment that will be created in this province. Just on the renewables alone, it's \$3 billion. The amount of money that's being put into this sector is certainly helping to create those jobs. There's no question that since coming into office, we have over 230,000 new net jobs. Obviously, the economy isn't in such dire straits as has been identified. We are doing well in this province. It's not without its challenges, but there's no question that investment is happening, and it's really encouraging to note that Alberta money is finally coming into—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Sara Anderson of Sudbury is in the ninth day of a hunger strike to protest your government's broken promises to Ontario's poorest families. You promised to raise social assistance rates by 3% every year, and you've broken that promise. You promised to end the clawback of the family benefit, and you have broken that promise. At a time when your government had a \$3-billion windfall, why is it that you haven't kept your promise to families like Sara Anderson's?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for franco-phone affairs): I thank the member of the third party for

her question. Yes, I am very much aware of the media report, and the ministry staff is monitoring this situation very closely.

But let me tell the House what we have done for people in need in our community since we were elected. We are the first government for decades that has increased social service benefits by 5%, 2% in the first year we were elected and 2% again. Is it enough? No, it's not enough, but at least we're going in the right direction and we are helping those in need in our community.

Ms. Martel: Well, minister, I'm glad to know that you're aware of the situation. The issue is, what are you going to do about it? Sara Anderson used to receive \$75 a month as a supplementary diet benefit. This was cut under your government to \$20 a month. Her daughter qualifies for the national child benefit, but the \$200 a month she receives from the federal government is clawed back by your government. After her rent is paid, Sara and her daughter live on a little more than \$300 a month. I spoke with Sara today. She's very determined but she's very weak and I am very concerned about her health.

Minister, in the face of your government's \$3-billion windfall, why have you utterly failed this family, and what are you going to do now to help them?

Hon. Mrs. Meilleur: Again, I thank the member from the third party for her question and her concern about one of her constituents. It's very unfortunate, but I am telling the House what this government has done and what we will continue to do in the next budget. Let me tell the member what we have also done: We have stopped the clawback of the additional increase that parents used to receive for the national child benefit. What it represents is that it will give families an additional \$56 million in support this year and \$75 million in 2007 and 2008. Instead of working to continue to support—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you, Minister. Sit down, Minister. New question.

1520

PROCEEDS OF CRIME

Mr. Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is for the Attorney General. I think I can safely say that all members of this House are concerned about the possibility of people profiting from unlawful activities. Minister, can you inform this House as to whether there's anything that can be done, and particularly whether there is any legislation in place, that enables the courts to allow for the civil forfeiture of assets that are obtained through unlawful activity?

Hon. Michael Bryant (Attorney General): I thank the member for the question. Yes, indeed, there is in place legislation in this province that seeks to prevent people from keeping assets that are acquired through unlawful activity. Under the Remedies for Organized Crime and Other Unlawful Activities Act, a court is authorized to freeze, seize and forfeit property that has a connection to unlawful activity. This civil asset forfeiture

is not dependent on any criminal charges and is not dependent on any convictions. Rather, it focuses solely on the connection between the property and the unlawful activities. It is just part of a coordinated strategy to fight organized crime using both civil and criminal law remedies.

Mr. Gravelle: There's relevance to that in terms of my riding. Constituents in my riding of Thunder Bay–Superior North were pleased by your recent announcement that civil assets that were found during the search of a vehicle stopped by OPP police officers near Marathon were to be forfeited to the crown. Minister, could you please give this House details of this particular civil asset forfeiture, as well as other instances where this legislation has been used to seize assets that were obtained through unlawful activity?

Hon. Mr. Bryant: The member is right: On April 3, more than \$120,000 was forfeited to the crown under the civil remedies legislation after it was proven before a court that the money was the proceeds and an instrument of unlawful activity. That is good news for victims. That is good news for strong communities.

Since we took office, the act has been used over 100 times in Ontario. Since we took office, more than \$2.3 million in assets have been collected under the act. On March 28, the court ordered the forfeiture of a notorious crack house at 193 King Street East in Hamilton and a bank account containing approximately \$10,000. This is just some of the nearly \$10 million in assets before the courts that are being taken out of the hands of those engaging in unlawful activities and being put back into strong communities.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. For the past 15 months, black and South Asian correctional workers in your Toronto institutions have faced threats and bullying from colleagues. How much longer are you going to tolerate racism within our correctional facilities?

Hon. Monte Kwinter (Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services): We have zero tolerance against any employee of the Ontario government, regardless of what ministry they are responsible to. Specifically about the case you're talking about, this is under investigation not only by the Toronto city police but by ministry officials. You should know that this is something that is not acceptable.

Having said that, this is also not the first time it has happened. It happened in 1998, 2000 and 2002. That was ongoing through the people appealing to the Human Rights Commission. The Human Rights Commission set up a tribunal. They have appointed two consultants who are working with the ministry to address this issue across the whole system.

I want to reiterate that it's unacceptable. It's something we are dealing with, but we cannot act until—

The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dunlop: Minister, I just want to point out that you are responsible for the correctional facilities in our province and what actually happens with the system and its employees. We have a problem that has been going on for 15 months, and it involves racial attacks against the highest-level black employee in our correction system, the deputy superintendent of administration, Mr. Dave Mitchell. I know Mr. Mitchell personally, and I know he's one of the most outstanding employees we have in the correctional system. I understand that your ministry is investigating the allegations. Can you answer me this: When did the investigation commence, when do you expect the investigation to be completed and are you prepared to recommend to the Attorney General that a public inquiry be called pending the outcome of your investigation?

Hon. Mr. Kwinter: I don't really want to comment on a specific case, because it is something that is under investigation. I can't tell you when it's going to be finished because I'm not conducting the investigation. It's being conducted by the Toronto Police Service and it's being conducted by ministry officials.

I can tell you that once we have the results of that investigation—and the member would realize that this is not the kind of activity where you can very easily determine who is doing it just by the very nature of it. People are doing it behind closed doors or in the dead of night. They're not identifying themselves and it's a very difficult case. I can't respond as to what we're going to do until we get that report from both my ministry officials and the police service, and then we will decide how we can address it.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-

term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

I affix my signature in support.

Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

"Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

"Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

"We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

Mr. John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to present another group of petitions from Marnwood Lifecare Centre in Bowmanville. The administrator is Tracey Werheid. I'm pleased to read it on their behalf:

"Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

"Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

"Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

"We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

I think of my mother-in-law, Madge Hall, who is in need of special attention at the community nursing home in Millbrook.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Deborah Matthews (London North Centre):

"Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

"Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

"Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

"Whereas Ontario's early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario's early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it."

I'm giving this to Ben, a resident of London North Centre, to take to the table. Thank you, Ben.

1530

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh (Halton): "Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

"Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need ... ; and

"Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

"We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents' councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007)."

I affix my signature to this, and I give it to page Raelene.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): I have a petition in regard to Country Terrace Nursing Home in my riding:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging

seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

AUTISM SERVICES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton): It’s my pleasure today to bring to this—

Applause.

Ms. MacLeod: Thank you.

It’s my pleasure to bring to the Legislature today a petition given to me by my NDP opponent in the March 30 by-election, Laurel Gibbons, a great autism advocate in this province.

“Whereas the incidence of autism spectrum disorders has dramatically increased in recent years and Ontario’s schools lack the required resources to accommodate this growing number of pupils; and

“Whereas children with ASDs are capable of academic success when they have appropriate support; and

“Whereas under the Education Act of Ontario, children with ASDs are legally entitled to receive appropriate special education programs and services; and

“Whereas many ASD pupils are denied their education rights and are suffering academically, socially and emotionally because of a lack of resources available to assist them with their disability-related needs; and

“Whereas the resources required to accommodate ASD pupils may include (but are not limited to) educational assessments; educational assistants; specialized personnel such as behavioural therapists, speech and language pathologists, and occupational therapists; specialized programs and curriculum (including social skills and life skills); transitional programs; and assistive technology;

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

“(1) Increase funding for special education, and ensure that this funding reaches ASD pupils to meet their disability-related learning needs;

“(2) Develop educational best practices and pilot projects for educating children with ASDs so that every

student with ASD across Ontario has access to the best possible programs and services.”

I am very proud to sign my name to this petition.

COMMUNITY MEDIATION

Mr. Kuldip Kular (Bramalea–Gore–Malton–Springdale): This petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas many types of civil disputes may be resolved through community mediation delivered by trained mediators, who are volunteers who work with the parties in the dispute; and

“Whereas Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services established the Peel Community Mediation Service in 1999 with support from the government of Ontario through the Trillium Foundation, the Rotary Club of Mississauga West and the United Way of Peel, and has proven the viability and success of community mediation; and

“Whereas the city of Mississauga and the town of Caledon have endorsed the Peel Community Mediation Service, and law enforcement bodies refer many cases to the Peel Community Mediation Service as an alternative to a court dispute; and

“Whereas court facilities and court time are both scarce and expensive, the cost of community mediation is very small and the extra expense incurred for lack of community mediation in Peel region would be much greater than the small annual cost of funding community mediation;

“Be it therefore resolved that the government of Ontario, through the Ministry of the Attorney General, support and fund the ongoing service delivery of the Peel Community Mediation Service through Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services.”

I support this petition.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro (York North): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

“Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

“Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that

they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community.”

As I am in complete agreement, I have affixed my signature and will be giving it to Sharmarke to pass to the table.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry–Prescott–Russell): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the people of Ontario expect the government of Canada to honour existing agreements with the government of Ontario;

“Whereas provinces and territories negotiated agreements with the federal government to ensure Canadians would have access to early learning and child care programs that are high quality, affordable, universally inclusive and developmental;

“Whereas parents in Ontario have demonstrated a high demand for greater access to high-quality early learning and child care programs;

“Whereas Ontario’s early learning and child care agreement with the government of Canada would provide Ontario families with at least 25,000 new high-quality, regulated child care spaces in the first three years;

“Whereas Ontario’s early learning and child care agreement represents a \$1.9-billion investment over five years in high-quality early learning and child care;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the government of Ontario in calling on the government of Canada to honour Ontario’s early learning and child care agreement, for the sake of the thousands of Ontario families who would benefit from it.”

I have also added my signature.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant): This petition is titled “Replace CAIS.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario Agriculture Minister Dombrowsky has said that ‘There are serious problems with the CAIS program’; and

“Whereas Canadian Agriculture Minister Strahl has said he remains committed to replacing CAIS; and

“Whereas Canadian agriculture ministers and their staff and bureaucrats have ‘been at the table’;

“We, the undersigned, demand CAIS be scrapped for a new program including a risk management program, self-directed risk insurance and farm disaster relief.”

On behalf of the farmers that have signed, I also have affixed my signature.

1540

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn (Oakville): Recently, I was visited by some of the residents’ council members from

West Oak Village Long Term Care Centre in Oakville, who asked me to read a petition on their behalf that was collected primarily by a lady by the name of Marlee Heron, who I understand is about 61 years of age. The petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas long-term-care funding levels are too low to enable homes to provide the care and services our aging seniors and parents who are residents of long-term-care homes need, with the respect and dignity that they deserve; and

“Whereas, even with recent funding increases and a dedicated staff who do more than their best, there is still not enough time available to provide the care residents need. For example, 10 minutes, and sometimes less, is simply not enough time to assist a resident to get up, dressed, to the bathroom and then to the dining room for breakfast; and

“Whereas those unacceptable care and service levels are now at risk of declining;

“We, the undersigned, who are members of family councils, residents’ councils and/or supporters of long-term care in Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to increase operating funding to long-term-care homes by \$306.6 million, which will allow the hiring of more staff to provide an additional 20 minutes of care per resident per day over the next two years (2006 and 2007).”

ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Mr. Speaker, I have a message from the administrator for the government of Ontario, signed by his own hand.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The administrator for the government of Ontario transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2007, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EDUCATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (STUDENT PERFORMANCE), 2006 LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ÉDUCATION (RENDEMENT DES ÉLÈVES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 5, 2006, on the motion for second reading of Bill 78, An Act to amend the Education Act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 and certain other statutes relating to education / Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation, la Loi de 1996 sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario et certaines autres lois se rapportant à l'éducation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River): On behalf of New Democrats, I'm pleased to be able to participate in this debate.

I think it's become evident to many people across the province that while the McGuinty government talks a good line on education, increasingly boards of education are asking, "Where is the money?" For example, one of the Catholic boards has been ordered now by the McGuinty government to cut reading recovery programs for children who are having difficulty learning how to read—a \$2-million cut. The McGuinty government is going to force that same board to cut \$2.6 million, for example, from caretaking and cleaning. I remember when Dalton McGuinty used to go through the roof, complaining that the former Conservative government was going to cut funding from school cleanliness, school health and safety.

The same school board is being ordered by the McGuinty government to cut vice-principals. Anyone who has been involved in teaching or in our schools knows that vice-principals are the people who do all the work in terms of discipline, in terms of sorting out problems at home or at school—everything which lies within those parameters. In order to cut vice-principals, the same board has also been ordered to make a substantial cut in adult education. This from a Premier who likes to give speeches about how education is an ongoing thing and we need to continue to involve ourselves in education.

But that board is not alone. I have spoken to representatives from several other boards of education who have said, "The government talks a good line on education, but from our board's perspective, the money isn't there. We don't have enough money for teachers' salaries. We don't have enough money for special education and we don't have enough money for school transportation," and it has led to all kinds of absurd results. For example, the Toronto board of education has been taking money that is supposed to be directed at English as a second language and they're using that money, depriving children who need English-as-a-second-language instruction, just to pay the hydro bill, the natural gas bill and the heating bill. There are other examples like that. Money that should be going to special education in some boards has had to be used to pay the hydro bill or to pay the heating bill. That's the level of problems, of challenges, that boards of education are facing as a result of the McGuinty government's failure to live up to their promises.

I remember when Dalton McGuinty used to criticize, on an almost daily basis, the school funding formula that was put in place under the former Conservative government. Here we are now, three years into the McGuinty government. Has that inadequate school funding formula that was put in place by the former Conservative government been changed substantially by the McGuinty government? No. It is still fundamentally the same funding

formula now under the McGuinty government. That's the complaint that school boards have. The McGuinty government likes to give a lot of speeches about education, the McGuinty government likes to pronounce on education, but increasingly boards of education are not finding the commitment of funds or the commitment of resources.

This bill, Bill 78, continues that tradition of the McGuinty government. When I read this bill, I was embarrassed to read some of the contents of it. The reason I was embarrassed to read some of the contents of it was because it's so obviously just filler. When the government can't come up or won't come up with the money—and I think it's really a case of "won't come up with the money," because we know that in this past fiscal year the McGuinty government had a \$3-billion revenue windfall, and yet school boards are taking money out of the English-as-a-second-language budget or the special education budget and having to use it to pay the hydro bill or the heating bill. The McGuinty government clearly had the money, but it was a political decision by them not to fund education. This bill is evidence of when the government can't keep its promises yet it wants to say something, so it comes forward with a bill like this that is loaded with filler.

Let me give you an example of some of the filler that you find in this legislation. It amends the Education Act to give cabinet broad powers to make regulations prescribing, respecting and governing the duty of boards. Get this: There's a regulation to "promote the provincial interest in education," as if you need a regulation to promote the provincial interest in education.

There's a regulation that requires boards to adopt measures to improve student success, reach goals in special education, to improve student health and to improve student safety. How are boards supposed to improve special education when the McGuinty government is forcing them to take money out of the special education budget and use it just to heat the school or keep the lights on?

Another example: requiring boards to adopt measures to improve student success. I know the trustees in my part of the province, the trustees of the boards. They don't get paid any money. They take all kinds of abuse. They go out to meeting after meeting after meeting. They put in hour after hour. Is the McGuinty government suggesting that these trustees who are on the boards are not there to improve student success? Is the McGuinty government suggesting they're there for some other purpose?

1550

To improve student health: Is the McGuinty government suggesting that those hard-working trustees in my constituency and in constituencies across the province don't care about student health? I'll tell you something. When you don't have enough money in the budget to keep the heat on when it's 30 and 40 below, that's risking student health, and that's what the McGuinty government has been doing. When you don't have enough money in

rural boards to safely and adequately provide for student transportation, when you don't have enough money in the budget to cover student transportation—in my constituency, some students are transported, not 40 kilometres, not 50 kilometres, not 60 kilometres, but some students are being transported 90 and 100 kilometres one way to school—then that's putting students at risk, and that's the fault of the McGuinty government; their failure, as boards have pointed out, to adequately fund student transportation; their failure to adequately fund special education; their failure to adequately fund teachers' salaries, which the former Minister of Education played a big hand in negotiating and setting in the first place.

It's bizarre that the McGuinty government thinks that, by these regulations—they must assume that the trustees who work so hard can't be trusted to want to improve student success, to want to improve student health and to want to improve student safety.

There are other regulations—when you see them, you say to yourself, “My, my, this is sad”—to force boards to publish reports about any regulations made under the act. Teachers I talk to say they're drowning in paper already, having to fill out documents and forms that are being pushed from above. Now the McGuinty government believes they have to have a regulation to force boards to publish reports about any regulations made under this act.

There's a regulation to set specific outcomes for students with regard to literacy and numeracy. The issue isn't setting outcome levels. The issue is the McGuinty government forcing, for example, one board to cut \$2 million from the reading recovery program. How is a board supposed to reach the required literacy levels when it's the McGuinty government saying, “You take \$2 million out of reading recovery”? How is a board supposed to ensure you're going to meet these targets when boards are saying, “Look, we're already having to take money out of the so-called classroom budget just to pay the heating bill, just to pay the hydroelectricity bill”?

So some of this, when you put it in the context of what boards are struggling with, is already theatre of the absurd and quite obviously theatre of the absurd.

Worse than that, though, this is micromanaging. I remember when Dalton McGuinty used to stand right about there and rail about the Conservatives wanting to micromanage everything that happened in the classroom, wanting to micromanage curriculum, wanting to micromanage what happened in this school, what happened in that school and what happened in another school somewhere else. What do we see in this legislation? We see the McGuinty government wanting to micromanage not just what happens at the school board level but what happens at the school level and what happens in the classroom. The very same things, the very same sins that Dalton McGuinty used to accuse the Conservatives of, when you read this bill, are repeated almost verbatim here: more micromanagement of what happens in the classroom, what happens in the school. As if the Conservatives weren't meddling enough, as if the Conservatives weren't trying to say, from an ivory tower in Toronto,

“You shall do thus and so at this particular time in this classroom,” the McGuinty government wants to go further.

There are some things here that are clearly just filler; there are some things here that, when you think about it, are bad regulations—they shouldn't be in any piece of legislation—and there are some things here that are so obviously an attempt by the McGuinty government to further and worsen the sad spectacle of school micro-management that we saw under the Conservatives.

I want to just remark on what a number of teachers are saying to me. I'm a former teacher. I spent my first two years teaching in Toronto at a school at Coxwell and Danforth; I spent the next two years teaching at a rural school in northwestern Ontario; and then I spent some time after that as a community college instructor. I still talk to a number of my colleagues, a number of my friends in schools across the province, and this is what they tell me.

They say, “Do you know what? What I really want to do is teach. What I really want to be able to do is spend as much time as I can with my students. What I really enjoy is watching students learn. What I abhor is more and more micromanagement. What I object to is someone in the minister's office or the deputy minister's office telling me I have to do thus and so at this time, that I can't be trusted to use my professional judgment.” That's what teachers are saying.

Teachers are saying that what they objected to under the Conservative government was more forms, more documents, more accounting minutiae that they had to go through, that they had to perform. Now what are they seeing under the McGuinty government? More being added; more micromanagement.

I don't think we need regulations requiring school boards to “promote the provincial interest in education.” I think the vast majority of school trustees are there in good faith. They're there because they're dedicated to education. They're certainly not there for the money, at \$5,000 a year, for the job they do. Many of them work full-time. Five thousand dollars is not even part-time pay; it's an embarrassment. They're there because they're dedicated. I don't think they need a regulation.

I don't think Ontario needs a regulation requiring them to “promote the provincial interest in education.” I don't think boards need a regulation requiring them to reach goals in special education. What they need is the special education funding that hasn't been provided by the McGuinty government, even though it was promised.

I don't think they need a regulation requiring them to improve student health. What they want is to be able to stop taking money out of budgets that are supposed to be directed at educating students and being forced to use that money just to keep the heat and the lights on in the school. I don't think they need a regulation requiring them to publish reports on new regulations. They're already drowning in paper. They don't need the McGuinty government to force them to produce more paper.

I don't think that boards need regulations setting specific outcomes for students with regard to literacy and numeracy. As I said, what they need is the money in the reading recovery program instead of the McGuinty government ordering them to cut money from the reading recovery program. They need the vice-principals in the hallways, they need the vice-principals in touch with parents and students instead of having the McGuinty government ordering them to cut the number of vice-principals. They don't need the McGuinty government telling them that they need to improve student health. What they need is for the McGuinty government to stop cutting money from the budget that was supposed to ensure that schools are kept clean and safe for students.

1600

I wish the McGuinty government would just go back and read some of their old speeches, the speeches they used to give in here. Stop trying to micromanage teachers in the classroom. Stop trying to micromanage vice-principals. Stop trying to tell trustees that they can't be trusted to improve student achievement, that trustees can't be trusted to look after student health and safety, that trustees can't be trusted to make good-faith decisions. Stop doing that stuff and start funding our schools at the level they need to be funded at. Get rid of the inadequate funding formula that was put in place by the former Conservative government, that Dalton McGuinty used to rail against so harshly.

After three years of the McGuinty government, that funding formula should be gone. It should be replaced by a funding formula that provides the money for English as a second language. It should be replaced by a funding formula that provides adequate money for teachers' salaries. It should be replaced by a funding formula that provides adequate money for student transportation. It should be provided with a funding formula that ensures there is money in the school budget to pay the heating bill when it's 30 or 40 below outside. It should be replaced by a funding formula that ensures that you don't have to raid the English-as-a-second-language budget in order to pay the hydro bill and keep the lights on.

I wish the McGuinty government would stop coming forward with bills like this that are filled with micromanagement, that are loaded with absurd regulations and that are loaded with filler, and do what we need to have done: Allow teachers to teach, allow vice-principals and principals to provide leadership, and allow trustees to make wise decisions, because the funding formula is there to provide for wise decisions.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments.

Mr. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): I've listened to the leader of the third party for the last 20 minutes. I was listening to his negative news to the people of Ontario, to the teachers and to the families of the students. I strongly believe that when the teachers listen to him they're going to be very upset, because the news, the information and the result that Dalton McGuinty gave to the teachers in the education system is very important and very well received by the people in this province.

We are the province of Ontario. We're the Dalton McGuinty government. We put education first in our priorities. We give education the first attention because we believe that the future cannot be built without educated people. That's why our government, our ministers and our Premier work very hard to enhance the education level of this province, to create peace and tranquility in the education system. I believe that the leader of the third party has been here for the last eight years. He knows what the Conservative Party did to the education system and to stability and tranquility: a fight between teachers, the government and parents. For the first time we have peace and tranquility, and teachers love to go back to school and love to teach the students, and the students love to come to school. The parents don't worry as before because they have peace, and they know exactly that Dalton McGuinty's government values education. Dalton McGuinty's government invests more. Dalton McGuinty's government respects them, works hard to lower the size of the class and works hard to recognize that trustees in Ontario and the work they do are not as the third party leader said.

We believe in that system and we believe in education. That's why we have a lot of dialogue between teachers and the government. We listen to them and to their concerns. That's why it's a great bill for all the people.

Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to speak a little bit about another subject in education. I will have an opportunity to speak to this bill a little later, but I want to talk a bit about our visitors here yesterday, the Ontario School Bus Association. I met with members of the association from my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

One of the most important things in our education system, in addition to teaching our children, is ensuring that they're getting to school safe and sound and returning home safe and sound. What this government has failed to address and continues to simply slide under the carpet is the crisis we have in rural school transportation. For example, in my county of Renfrew, we have the oldest fleet of buses in the province. We have the lowest-paid bus operators in the province.

It is a result of the failure of this ministry, despite the ex-minister's promises—and now I guess he's making promises to federal Liberals—to come in with a fair funding formula that addresses the needs of rural Ontarians. He has not done that. In fact, when you talk to some of the boards across the province, our school bus operators tell them, "Do you know that we don't have radios?" They want our school bus operators to have first aid courses, CPR courses and all this kind of stuff, but they don't even have radios in their buses, because they don't have the money.

This government has failed rural schools. Six schools in my riding closed this past September. And they're continuing to ignore the needs of our children getting to and from school. That needs to be addressed. A fair funding formula for rural Ontario busing must be addressed immediately.

Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East): I'm glad to be able to participate a little bit by some questions and comments. Later on, I'll be giving some of my remarks on the bill.

I have to say that I'm really quite in agreement with the issues that were raised by the member for Rainy River. I have to say that because I've taken a look at the bill and I hear what the Liberal members have to say. They're still talking on their message box about all of the great things that Dalton McGuinty is doing in education, but if you just peel back a small layer—and I'm going to use one as an example. In fact, Mr. Ramal, the member from—I can't remember where he's from.

Mr. Hampton: London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Horwath: The member from London—Fanshawe was talking about this great relationship with the trustees and the teachers, this new relationship and this new kind of scenario that they're claiming to have created. But it's interesting, when you look at some of the comments that were made by my leader—because it's very clear that when you peel back just a small layer, you can see that this bill in fact creates all kinds of new measures where the minister can put the hammer down on the trustees if the minister is not happy with the way the trustees are dealing with the accountability measures that they put into this bill.

Although they talk about this new relationship of respect, through discussing quite bluntly the issue of remuneration for trustees and the fact that trustees are going to be getting some new opportunities to have some remuneration that reflects the importance of their job, which of course is something that everybody would agree with, but turn the page a couple of times in the bill and you see where the hammer comes down. If the government is not happy with the kinds of decisions that the trustees are making, not only does the hammer come down, but it comes down on a personal level, with the individual trustees being open to various actions by the government for not undertaking what's required by the government. Quite frankly, that's not a trust and respectful relationship. In fact, it's quite punitive.

Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough): It's always a delight to listen very carefully to the leader of the third party from Rainy River.

I have an interesting perspective on education. My wife is a grade 8 teacher in St. Teresa's school in Peterborough, and from time to time we chat about education issues. My wife always tells me her fond remembrance of the NDP government, in which the member from Rainy River was first the Attorney General and then the Minister of Natural Resources, which took her contract and went like this: oh, dear me, tore it up, tore up her contract.

1610

Then my wife went through the eight years of Tory rule. That was an interesting time because every day during those eight years teachers in the classroom were bashed and bashed again, told they were doing a poor job, told they were unaccountable, told they weren't doing a good job in the classroom.

Then in October 2003 a new day came to Ontario, when teachers were finally respected for the great job they do every day in the classrooms of this province. I have an opportunity to visit many schools in Peterborough riding and it's interesting when I'm there, talking to students, talking to teachers, talking to vice-principals, talking to principals. They uniformly say that things have never been better in the classrooms of the province of Ontario. That's due to the leadership of this government and to bills like Bill 78.

We've accomplished a lot in two and a half years. When you're talking to parents, they see a renewed interest in what's going on in the classroom. They feel part of the process. It's interesting that Bill 78 will move this process to the next step. These are good times for classrooms in Ontario.

I hear about school busing. Part of the problem with busing is when the previous government rammed amalgamations down their throats—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member for Kenora—Rainy River, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Hampton: To the member from Peterborough, I think it's safe to say from his exposé here that he won't be supporting Bob Rae, but he's yours now; you've got him.

I want to rise above some of the commentary and simply look to what third-party analysts are saying. For example, economist Hugh Mackenzie estimates that the McGuinty government is over \$1.4 billion short of meeting the recommendations laid out in the Rozanski report. You remember the Rozanski report, which said that school funding was inadequate under the Conservatives? He says that now, three years into the McGuinty government, the schools are still \$1.4 billion short of the funding they need.

In their 2004 tracking report, People for Education describe how teacher salary allocations in Ontario are roughly 10% less than what the boards actually spend, which means boards have to take money out of other budgets to meet the salary requirement.

A report by the Toronto Parent Network revealed that roughly half of the English-as-a-second-language funding at the Toronto board was in fact being spent on utilities because they were still being funded at a 1997 level.

There is the government's own report on the Dufferin-Peel Catholic school board, where this government is saying to that board to lay off custodial and cleaning staff to the tune of \$2.6 million, to cut continuing education to the tune of \$1 million, to defer \$2 million of maintenance, which goes directly to health and safety, and to cut \$2 million from the reading recovery program, which is intended to help those students who are having trouble learning to read. I think that speaks for itself.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West): It's a pleasure to join the debate here on Bill 78, a fairly concise bill, as a matter of fact, some 31 brief pages. This is a bill that makes a number of minor amendments that we know in the vernacular as housekeeping changes that enable the

government to do three of our most important things in education. Bill 78 enables the government to keep its promises to parents, to educators and to students. It includes measures necessary to enhance student performance and, very important to teachers, to treat educators with respect and to remain open to the public.

In the course of my duties as an MPP, I have the privilege—I look upon it also as a responsibility—to visit our western Mississauga schools. I try to visit each elementary and secondary school at least once a year, and most years I can get to nearly all of them. Many of the other speakers who have joined in this debate, especially my colleague from Peterborough, have commented that you can see and sense the palpable change in the schools these days. Teachers are taking pride in their profession. Once again, they're being treated as professionals.

I can see the difference now between the climate and the morale in our schools and what it was in the climate under the former government. For the first time in years, teachers feel better about themselves, and they feel better about the job that they do. How does that translate? It translates into students who are more involved in what they're learning, students who can get excited about what they're learning, students who can have that spark ignited in them by a teacher who's truly passionate about what he or she is doing and about the lives placed in their charge—and, during that hour, to try to make one little piece of magic happen.

As someone who is also a former teacher, although I taught in the school of business studies at Ryerson University, I do understand some of the things that teachers go through. It is without a doubt one of the most rewarding things not only that I did for my students but that my students ever did for me. I discovered things in being a teacher that I was never able to learn while I was a student, and I was hoping that I could impart some of that excitement of discovery to the young men and young women in my charge.

That's certainly what I see as well, especially when I'm in our high school classes. I look at the community resumé that I had at the age of many of the high school students that I visit and I think to myself, "Gosh, with the requirement to do 40 hours of community service, students today just have awesome resumé's by the time they're ready to enter the workforce." They do a good job. They work hard for the people they volunteer for. In looking at them compared to my generation—admittedly, we didn't have the requirement or, for that matter, the opportunity, but I will say this, as one of the baby boomers: The generation of students to whom we're passing the torch are a fine group of men and women. I'm proud of them as I go and meet them. I think the world that we hand them is going to be a better world than our parents handed to us, and they're going to be eminently qualified to take this province and this country, this great nation of Canada, forward because, as a generation, I'll say to them right now, "You're fine people. We're all proud of you."

It's important that we treat teaching as a profession. Bill 78 allows teachers to be treated as professionals and

as well to behave as professionals, in much the same way that we expect and assume that other professionals will act, professionals such as accountants, lawyers, architects and engineers. Very much like teachers, they too have their professional body. They too participate in standard-setting. They too participate in decisions regarding the conditions in which they work and the mental software that they use while they're at work.

One of the first measures of respect is a stable, long-term collective agreement with the federations that represent our teachers. These are not just agreements bought by throwing money at unsustainable collective agreements. The work that our ministry, our boards and the federations that represent our teachers have done has been fair, sustainable and responsible. They've done a good job. They've yielded four-year—in other words, long-term—collective agreements that mean peace and stability in our schools. It means that we don't have to worry whether or not there will be a work stoppage. We know that, after the signing of those agreements last year, we have four years of peace and four years in which teachers can know that the agreements that they negotiated were good agreements. They were fair agreements, and they allow teachers to keep pace with the cost of living and to look at themselves as professionals and say, "I do professional work. I'm at the top of my game, and I'm paid for it."

We've started to get rid of the paperwork burden on teachers. On the watch of our predecessors, many teachers filled out multi-page detailed reports on students for a variety of reasons—reports that were never even read. The former government did what it called "statistical sampling" of the thousands and thousands of detailed reports submitted for a variety of reasons. We feel that if a teacher is going to be asked to write a report on a student, then a human being will read it and a human being will make a meaningful decision based on the information that's in that report.

1620

In Peel region, in both of our school boards, we used to have an epidemic of portables. On the watch of our predecessors, their government froze the building of schools. They cut maintenance; they cut repair budgets. They froze teachers' salaries and, just like the minimum wage on their watch, never raised them—not even once in eight long years.

The climate of teacher-bashing is gone now. For a change, teachers can welcome their provincial representative into their classroom and know that when their provincial representative comes back and stands in caucus or stands in this Legislature, he can say, "I visited with my teachers. I've talked to them. I've listened to them. I'm proud of them. They're doing a good job."

Among the things that Bill 78 allows is orientation for new teachers. It allows for mentoring. It allows for expanded professional development—all measures that used to be there but were cut on the watch of the former government. In our private lives, in the things that we do, we're kind of used to this, and we think to ourselves,

“Well, are you saying that teachers don’t have this?” I know that in the software development industry, with which I’m a little familiar, the expectation was that on company time and at company expense you would be doing anywhere from five to 15 days of professional development just to stay level with your craft. It’s that type of attitude that Bill 78 is bringing back to the teaching profession in saying, “We value what you do as professionals. We want you to stay on top of your game. We want you to stay current with the thinking in your craft. We want you to stay current with the subjects that you’re teaching, and we encourage you to go out and learn what the latest thinking is, what the latest methods of teaching are, what the latest theories and philosophies are, and to bring those best practices back into your school and into your class to shape and mould the minds you’re charged with.” That’s the sort of thing we want in Ontario, and that’s the sort of thing Bill 78 is bringing with it.

Bill 78 is also bringing a revitalized Ontario College of Teachers. This is the professional body akin to the ones I referred to earlier that represent our lawyers, our accountants and other professionals. It’s important that the Ontario College of Teachers has the confidence of its members, which is why half of those members will be teachers; that it has the confidence of the public and that the public understands that the Ontario College of Teachers is there to find the best minds and mould them into the best teachers. That’s what Bill 78 will give the Ontario College of Teachers the flexibility to do.

It’s also important that people understand that the Ontario College of Teachers is a professional body and not a political body. As such, the Ontario College of Teachers will be depoliticized, again a reasonable expectation that people have of a professional body, and Bill 78 will enable it for the Ontario College of Teachers.

Bill 78 grants boards the flexibility to cope with local conditions. Certainly in the area that I represent, in Peel region, both the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board have received funding far beyond the rate of growth. For example, the Dufferin-Peel board, which has had growth of only 3% in the last four to five years, has had an increase of funding on the order of 20%. This has enabled our boards to open schools where they’ve been badly needed, and enabled parents to know that their children are going to be close to the schools that they are going to attend. Of course, those will be new schools, state-of-the-art schools.

Speaker, I could go on; there’s a great deal of value in Bill 78. But I thank you for the time to debate it.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. John O’Toole (Durham): We’re doing the two minutes now, I gather, is it?

I guess I’m responding to the member’s response. I’m surprised that he hasn’t taken his allocated 20 minutes on a government bill of this importance. He espoused that it’s going to fix everything that has been, in his opinion, broken for many years. I’m questioning why he didn’t

use all of his time, because certainly in the limited time we have as members of the opposition to bring forward concerns—it’s our hope, seriously, that this bill would go to public hearings.

The member from Mississauga West does bring some really good points to the table, but he fails to mention some of the current dilemmas. As we know, some of the areas he talked about—and I will be speaking to them in a few moments—really didn’t address where the real issues are. In fact, there is a gap in the funding formula. I would say that he made a mistake in the area of capital funding. If you were to consult with any person in education, you would find that there were more new schools built in Ontario because they changed the funding formula. It was all based on enrolment, and it wasn’t a political decision any longer. In the old system, persons often lobbied governments—I suppose all governments, in the past—to get a new school in their area. We changed the funding formula; it’s all enrolment-based. Also, the development charges that helped acquire land were all contingent upon growth in the municipality. So there were new schools built.

The area that I’m most surprised at, which was mentioned by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, is the lack of recognition of other-than-urban centres in Ontario. The problems they’re having in small-town Ontario and rural Ontario are extremely important in the busing area and for children with special education needs and support. I will be speaking on those areas, which I think are extremely important for the stability and importance of education in Ontario.

Ms. Horwath: I too think it’s important that we note that much of the discussion that’s coming from the government side—10 minutes isn’t really a lot of time to spend on a bill they are taking so much pride in.

I have to tell you that, as we look closer and closer at this bill, there are significant issues that it doesn’t address. While there are pieces in here that the government is very proud of, we need to make sure we’re also informing the public—that’s what they always say they are trying to do—about not only what they’re not talking about that is in here but also what’s not in here.

I look forward to making some comments a little later very much based on the experience of my own community that reflects not only some problems with the bill but also some of the pieces that this government continues to miss when it comes to doing what they purport to do, which is improve the education system by leaps and bounds.

I can tell you that certainly English-as-a-second-language students, aboriginal students, students who are refugees and students who are facing other kinds of challenges—special-needs students—are not getting the kind of education they deserve in the province of Ontario. School boards are still very frustrated by a lack of appropriate funding formulas, by a lack of dollars to meet the gaps they are currently dealing with in terms of salaries, by the fact that they are not able to construct the kinds of facilities they think they should be constructing in order

to meet the needs of students, and by the fact that they still have significant problems getting students to and from school. All these issues are reflected very clearly in my own boards of education, including issues around ability to provide appropriate French immersion programs.

I look forward to raising those issues a little later on.

Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington): I am pleased to be able to respond to the comments that my colleague from Mississauga West has made on Bill 78. My colleague spoke about professional development opportunities which are outlined in this bill. I'd like to talk a little bit about that, because I think that's a very important issue.

When we were dealing with the previous Tory government, there seemed to be a great deal of hostility around the whole area of teacher professional development. We've done a couple of things to improve on that.

One is that we're getting rid of the test that teachers need to write—which the Tories brought in—in order to be licensed as teachers. This has been a very controversial test, because virtually everybody passes it and it doesn't really prove anything. We're replacing that one-time teacher test with a whole year of mentoring for first-year teachers, where they will be paired up with an experienced teacher and get on-the-job, in-class support with learning how to teach in that first year. In fact, their professional development under this bill will be tied to performance appraisal. As we look at that new teacher coming into the profession, we ensure that they are getting support, but we also make sure that the principals and vice-principals are reviewing the performance and making sure the performance in the classroom is up to snuff, not just what somebody writes down on a piece of paper.

I would submit that this is both a more supportive way, but also a more effective way to make sure we have quality teaching. We're also, on a go-forward basis, allowing more professional development days so that all teachers can have better access to professional development.

1630

Mr. Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford): I'm pleased to join the debate with respect to Bill 78 and dealing with the comments from the member for Mississauga West. There are a number of areas he didn't touch on because he only spoke on the bill for 10 minutes, and this is quite a lengthy bill that deals with substantial changes to the education system and, some people may argue, with the watering down of the standards that were put in place in education in this province.

We now have a new education minister, and because of the funding deficits that are facing school boards it's probably a good time for former Minister Kennedy to leave and join the federal fray, in terms of leaving his legacy at this point in time where there's a lack of funding out there based on the Rozanski report in terms of proper funding for school boards.

The bill we're dealing with has some changes that I would say basically water down the existing standards. It has some interesting provisions with respect to permitting and empowering the minister to "collect ... personal information as is reasonably necessary for purposes related to" administering and ensuring compliance with the act. Nobody has commented on those wide-reaching powers, as to why that would be necessary and what personal information the minister would be looking for, be it related to the people who teach in the system, be it related to the students who are taught in the system, or whether it's related to the parents of students in the system. It's really a very strange provision in what they're trying to accomplish in terms of perhaps profiling in terms of the education system.

The Deputy Speaker: The member from Mississauga West has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Delaney: I thank my colleagues for joining in the debate and for their informed comments. My colleague from Durham especially is a very capable hockey player, and as a debater he is very clearly every bit as good a skater on thin ice.

My colleague from Hamilton East recognizes, to use her own words, that there are pieces in here that the government is very proud of. Frankly, I agree with her: We are proud of Bill 78. It doesn't do everything the government is going to do in its four years in education, but in the areas Bill 78 addresses, it does so very well. I thank her for her comments. I have no doubt we will be hearing more from her later this afternoon.

My colleague from Guelph–Wellington has pointed out that one's working life is also a journey in lifelong learning. Her comments suggest that mindless testing is indeed meaningless, but that a process of organized learning is something that adds value to one's working life. That's what professional development is all about. It's not about a series of events that culminate in a test that says you did or you didn't, you passed or you failed, but it's something that adds value to what you do as a teacher in the classroom.

My colleague from Barrie–Simcoe–Bradford commented on the length of time I spoke to the bill. I'd just like to let him know that my colleague from Ottawa–Orléans will have more to say on Bill 78 later this afternoon.

Rather than watering down the education process, Bill 78 enables lower class sizes. That's not watering down. One of the things it does that not many people have talked about is that it clarifies and expands and makes meaningful the role of the student trustee. Boys and girls, we've got something there for you. Watch for it. It also redefines many of the roles of the existing part-time trustees and enables them to be treated with professionalism and respect.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr. O'Toole: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 78. As has been said, it's a fairly comprehensive bill. I believe there are eight sections dealing with amendments to a number of acts. As such, I think

you have to sort of start at the beginning and look at what the goals are.

When I was starting to prepare for this, I looked at the election promises made by the Liberals and I dug out one of their many pledge books. These are the books that were presented during the election. I'm just going to see how they're doing, sort of a report card, if you will. It has to do with Bill 78. I'm sure I'll see most of what they promised in the bill, as we try to relate the two pieces. Most of these are laudable objectives. I would expect that most members on all sides, in all parties, would support the objectives. It's one thing to make a promise; it's quite another thing to have a plan of achieving those promises. In fact, by any measurement that should occur, the real report card here will occur October 4, 2007, certainly for the members of the government side.

Here are some of the promises: "Higher student achievement." It would seem to me by the wording here that they're going to force higher achievement. You could do that two ways. You could provide more absolute direct teaching time or you could potentially lower the bar. You could lower some of the tests or the expectation levels. I would hope that it was the students being put first.

"We will ensure that at least 75% of students meet the standards within our first term of office." The question then becomes, what's the standard? I always like to say it's like the wait times in health care. They're going to tell us that the wait times are going to be reduced, but what's the standard, what's the benchmark?

To go on, "We will cap class sizes in the all-important early grades." My wife is an elementary teacher. In fact, I believe this is her last year of teaching. She's going to have to submit her resignation to retire this year, if she wishes. It's a tough decision, because she does love teaching. She really is finding it a difficult struggle. But she's saying that to have this one-size-fits-all kind of approach—in this particular year she does not have 20 students per class in her elementary grade, as promised. I think she has 24, and I'm saying this on the public record. She has a couple of children with special needs.

The point I'm making is that this one-size-fits-all, the 20 students per class, may be a disadvantage. You'd have to let the principals and the other administrators make those kind of decisions. I still believe that they need the flexibility to make the decisions, either at the teaching level, the principal level or the superintendent level, or indeed the director or board level. If there's a particular teacher that's burdened with many children with special needs, or there aren't enough children, where they'd have to have split or triple grades in one room to meet this magic 20 students, it may be a disservice to the students. So there's a second promise that I question. They're going to get there, perhaps, but my experience is that while they say they're going to have classes of 20 in junior kindergarten to grade 3, clearly the evidence that I'm speaking to, of which I know today, it's not the case, and we're a long way—

Now, you've got to look at the implications here. When you force more classes, you have to have more

classrooms. If you have to have more classrooms, you have to have more teachers, which will become part of my concluding remarks on this in the limited time that I have. Because you'll see that most of the bill is to deal with the governance issues in a regulatory framework for the college, etc. Quite honestly, you'll see in my concluding remarks that the issue they're having with the Peel board is that it's all about there's not enough money. I put to you now, right on the record, really early, that about 25% to 30% of boards in the province of Ontario are in deficit, or they have robbed or completely eliminated any reserve funds or contingency funds they've had. That's the problem. Yes, they've flushed in 144 new teachers or some number like that—and no one would argue with that—but they're not supplying the funding that goes along with it. There's a great gap of about \$7,000 per teacher, where their funding formula is a certain amount but the actual amount is \$7,000 higher.

The next promise here is, "We will make reading, writing and math mandatory in each teaching day." Again, as I restate, most of the members here would agree with that wholeheartedly. The literacy initiatives I can see as laudable objectives, so that each of us will be complimentary when we see that the real intent is the students and that the resources are there. I think the announcement by the Minister of Culture of additional funding for libraries in my riding is welcomed, with increased literacy both in the computer, digital environment as well as in books, the importance of learning, and certainly to have mentors to encourage children. Most of the information they're going to have to gain in their life is in books and other media.

1640

Another promise they make here is, "We will make high-quality child care and education available for our youngest learners." If I look at it, I'm going to say that I have five children and all but two of them are married now, and we have two grandchildren, so I know how difficult it is especially for professional young couples today and all that. But the point I'm making is that if you look at junior kindergarten, they start that at about three years of age. I think that for parents—the man and woman or whatever—to bond with the child, they need a year or two. I'd be more in favour of extending parental leave or transition-to-the-workplace kinds of initiatives so that the parents have at least those first two formative years in the early development of that child.

That doesn't mean they shouldn't be exposed to the early learning centres that we put in place after the Mustard-McCain report. The early learning centres could be balanced to increase the appropriateness of certain types of learning materials for the child and to teach parents what's age-appropriate learning material, and those resource centres should be expanded so that parents and children learn together and celebrate the beauty of learning.

There's nothing really negative except for their strategies. There doesn't seem to be a consistent plan here. Making high-quality child care is all part of that recent

federal election on child care. There's no question that we can't assume that all parents of children are capable and we can't assume that they're all incapable, and that only the nanny state or the motherhood of government knows best. What is important is to certainly provide resources in the community, opportunities for new parents to learn parenting skills and to expose children to other kinds of environments in a family-friendly setting.

I'm wondering how this daycare system is going to work. If you're part of their plan here—and I'm looking at my riding in Port Perry or Sunderland or north parts of my riding near Brock township—I wonder how they're ever going to get to a nursery school or daycare or whatever they're going to call it. Are they going to put the children on a bus? Many of those families from my riding that live, say, in Port Perry, Blackstock, or Burketon, which is an upscale type of community on the Oak Ridges moraine, are professional people. Most of them work in Toronto. If those couples want those children to go into daycare programs, what are they going to do, drop them off at some school at nine in the morning and then get to work by noon? No. I think there need to be more thought and more partnerships with parents to make sure that this universal daycare, this one-size-fits-all approach—as in class sizing.

I'm not against Best Start. I think there's been a lot of commendable work done by Fraser Mustard in the Early Years study. He's an eminent child psychologist, I believe. I've heard him speak several times. It's important to keep parents up to speed with that early, formative development of the child.

Another promise: "We will help children with special needs." Well, there's the one that's really starting to tug at my heart. I've met with autism families in my riding—the work they've done, the promises in writing that Dalton made prior to the election. It's almost shameful, this taking advantage of the political process and of those vulnerable families who have children, no one would argue, with special needs. They are still in court with those autistic children with needs around linking the pre-school program to the school program. If you listen to some of the comments I'm going to make very specifically to three separate areas, special ed will be one of them. I can tell you from experience. My older sister, who's now retired, was a teacher as well. She was a specialist in speech pathology, and she told me that this one on one is extremely important and early intervention is extremely important.

The system of developing special education programming for each individual child and their special needs is kind of a red-tape system. The child has to be identified; they have to be assessed. Then they go through what they call an IPRC, an individual placement review, and after that review they develop a program that's appropriate to that child. By that time, the child is in about grade 3 or 4 and you've missed the early intervention opportunity.

What they've got to work with is the parents, who, prior to school, have developed a specific relationship or

ways of communicating with that child with special needs. They're leaving behind the family, which is going to have that child all his life. As a parent with children in their 30s and 20s, I can tell you that they are still and will always be my children, as any parent here would say. Some of them do have special needs, and I could speak more of that.

"We will help struggling students." There's so much turmoil, quite honestly, in the classroom, not just Bill 78 but the changing demands in the school with security and nutrition programs. There's so much being expected of the schools, not just literacy but nutrition, sense of worth and security, and they have a name for that. I think it's called character education. Avis Glaze, who is with the Ministry of Education now and eminently respected—she was part of the Royal Commission on Learning and she was the director of education for the Pine Ridge board. She initiated this character education program, which I think she's now head of. I've also met with the Lions Club, which has a program called Lions-Quest that I believe is an up-and-ready and running program where the government doesn't have to spend millions of dollars potentially developing a program to try to engage and address these children who are struggling. We know the relationship and the social consequences of children struggling, who potentially fall out of school. There can be great risk to themselves, their families and, indeed, society.

We all have a stake in this, and it's not even at an ideological level. It is at a level of, "Let's get it right. Let's listen to the professional educators."

"Better schools for better learning. We will make our schools safe." It's almost in lockdown mode. Then again, they go back to the one-size-fits-all, father-knows-best mentality where everybody has to have the cameras and the locks and the various things, which make children hypersensitive to the security issue, which may not be appropriate for every school.

Another promise here: "We will help students create well-rounded citizens." That's the one that's talked about, the character education. That's going to put unmeasured expectations on the educators themselves, the teachers. As I said, one of my other daughters, who is a secondary school teacher, I believe in science—I'm not absolutely sure of her specialty area, but she's a very knowledgeable young person. She taught here for a couple of years. She's now teaching in England; she's been there three or four years. She is a department head in an English high school right in London, and she has told me that they are working very hard on the inner city school dilemma. I think some of the exchanges there are not particularly well-addressed by anything I see from the government.

That is their booklet. They're not available any more. It's full of promises, almost all of them undelivered. It's paying more, getting less, no plan. The only plan they had was to print these fancy brochures. I have several of them here. Now we're sort of saying, "Gee, you've got the wait times. You've got all these things to measure."

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Durham, I've allowed you to wave them around a bit. I would appreciate it if you would keep those on your desk, please.

Mr. O'Toole: I didn't mean to use them as a prop. I think they're just a point of information as related to Bill 78.

After two and a half years, this is really the first bill. As I said, this bill here—if I go through the preamble, it usually gives you a précis, an outline, an executive summary, if you will, of the bill. There are eight sections in this bill, and it's quite complex, because it doesn't just amend the Education Act; it amends the college of teachers act and other statutes, education accountability, the quality improvement act, the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act, a lot of acts.

For some of the new members to understand this, you have to refer to the act it's amending. You can't just read this little thing here. A lot of regulations will flow from this that aren't even gazetted yet. We don't know really what they're going to do.

1650

I want to keep this current. I have read something here, a press release—the prop here is the bill, Mr. Speaker—and it says, “In the wake of Gerard Kennedy's resignation as Minister of Education, Sandra Pupatello inherits his legacy of underfunded program announcements and policy commitments.

“After two and a half years, Gerard Kennedy has left Ontario's education system burdened with policy and contractual commitments beyond the fiscal ability of school boards, leading inevitably to deficits in every school board in the province in the coming year.

“He leaves in his wake a multi-million dollar funding shortfall that school boards will have to deal with as the result of his ‘peace at any cost’” labour settlement with the teacher unions.

“His only major piece of legislation in two and a half years, Bill 78, robs school boards of any meaningful role, undermines the authority of school board trustees, strips away the independence of the college of teachers, does away with qualifying tests for new teachers, and downloads numerous responsibilities to school boards without any commitment of resources,” i.e. the dollars.

“After two and a half years, rather than delivering on his promise to provide services to autistic children, this minister is fighting autistic children in the courts” this very day. “Rather than improving services to special-needs students, this minister presided over the clawing back of special-needs funding from schools boards across the province, and rather than adequately funding transportation for Ontario's students, this minister has ignored the appeals of the Ontario School Bus Association”—who were here yesterday, whom I'm sure you met, but did you listen?—“and has forced hardship on parents and students throughout rural and northern Ontario.”

In conclusion, “He has yet to deliver on the promised funding to keep rural and small schools open, and deflects responsibility for the imminent closing of many of those schools. And at a time when other jurisdictions are setting even higher standards for their students, this

minister, in the name of ‘student achievement,’ has lowered the bar and dumbed down the curriculum, and compromised provincial testing standards, all in an effort to meet a political agenda” and not the interests of students.

That's quite discouraging. To verify that these aren't just political statements by the opposition, which is our need to do, I'm looking at what has been said in the printed media by third parties; for instance, the chair of the Upper Grand District School Board: “The idea that Queen's Park knows best—whether the school is in Thunder Bay or Guelph—obviously stinks for people like Bob Borden. ‘Where's the local decision-making?’ asks Borden,” chairperson of the Upper Grand District School Board.” So he's not happy.

Another one is quite surprising. This is from Emily Noble, of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario—very well respected. I've met with her in times past, and felt she has always had an independent voice. “The province already conducts province-wide tests and Noble said the union will not support what she calls ‘additional demands on students.’ The bill proposes to set educational outcomes for students.

“The union is also concerned about proposed restrictions on who would be eligible to run for a position” in the college, and this is where the union in the college issue becomes quite complex. I'll tell you, at the end of the day, it's going to be what sinks them.

This is quite good: “It's not the first time the minister has made this announcement. It's the third time Gerard Kennedy had made this announcement. Most trustees would greet this with a great deal of skepticism.” That was from Durham District School Board chair Michael Barrett. Remember, when someone promises you, and especially promises our children, and fails to deliver, there should be a standard for the measurement of outcomes and expectations.

In the minute or two left, I think I will, in my summary statement, point to the currency of the issue with the Peel board. They have just been audited, and it has been clarified that they are underfunded. Rozanski says it; People for Education say it. When I listen to the prepared speeches written for the members here and read—they just read the speeches given to them by Gerard, now Sandra Pupatello—I'm disappointed with their lack of insight about the difficulties with this bill. I'm saying to you that this bill fails the children of Ontario. It needs to have hearings, and the people involved in education need to have a much louder voice.

You must look at the headlines on the Dufferin Peel board. There are three key issues, all of which I have covered here: acknowledgement of underfunding of salaries, transportation and special education. This is about children, and the issue here today is, are you listening and are you prepared to amend this very flawed bill?

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to make some comments on the previous speech. A number of the issues

that were raised, although the details might be a little bit different from the way I look at them, certainly are important ones. I think we need to be really clear about not only what this bill contains but what it doesn't contain, not only what it does but what it doesn't do, and also about some of the concerns that still remain outstanding when it comes to the provision of a good-quality education in school boards across the province, in large communities and small.

The member was talking about rural communities in particular and the experience of his own family members in regard to the provision of education, as they are teachers. I think that brings some insight into specific situations, but really what this kind of legislation purports to do is to bring a more systems approach to the education system. I can provide some information myself about what we see, from the New Democratic Party perspective but also from my own personal understanding of the school systems in my own community, to highlight the fact that this bill will not take care of a number of the really problematic areas that the educators, teachers and boards in this province are still facing in regard to achieving that goal of attaining superior, or at least appropriate, qualities of education across the province.

I think that the time we're going to be spending this evening and in any further debate we're going to have over time on this bill is extremely important, because the people of Ontario need to know it's not just about government spin and it's not just about celebrating some of the things they think are great about this bill, but also about taking a really appropriate look at where the shortcomings still exist in this government's education policy, because they're very severe.

Mr. Leal: I'm always pleased to have a moment of reflection when comments are made by my good friend the member for Durham. I don't need the speaking notes provided by the ministry. The notes I have are my first-hand experience going from classroom to classroom in schools throughout the riding of Peterborough, from Bridgenorth to Lakefield to Otonabee to Keene to Havelock to Norwood. The message is clear: When you talk to the students in the classroom, when you talk to the teachers, there's a new day in the province of Ontario that started in October 2003.

I said in my previous remarks that my wife is a teacher. She's been teaching grade 8 in St. Teresa's school in Peterborough for some 17½ years. When you talk to teachers, they reflect on those Tory years, those eight years when they were afraid to speak out on issues in the classroom from fear of repercussions from that big team they had here at Queen's Park. When people were outspoken and tried to point out to them fundamental flaws in their education policy, they were afraid the big hammer was going to come down on top of them.

When October 2003 came, the appointment of a new Minister of Education, Mr. Kennedy, brought about renewal in Ontario's classrooms from Cornwall to Kenora to Petrolia to Peterborough to Bowmanville to Barrie,

that great sense of renewal that keeps going on in the classroom. Bill 78 is part of that. That very positive legacy that has now been passed on to the new Minister of Education will allow us to keep moving forward to fulfill those campaign commitments we made to higher standards for education in Ontario.

Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I certainly welcome the opportunity to comment on the presentation from our member for Durham. It's not the first presentation I've heard from the member for Durham on issues of education. In fact, I've been captivated by many presentations, not only in the Legislature but in caucus, in meetings and in one-on-one conversations. This fellow knows of what he speaks.

1700

There was mention made of being in schools. I was with a grade 5 class on Friday in Dunnville. I had a great time chatting with these students, answering questions; that was always my style when I taught. It's interesting: When I think of these children in grade 5, they probably weren't born when the member from Durham was elected, in 1995. It put that in perspective for me, the environment that these grade 5 students have really gone through with their educational system. They're in a school in a small town. I don't know whether any of those elementary schools are threatened with closure, but it does bring to my mind the attachment that they would have to their particular school.

They asked me about my school days and, quite honestly, I was going to tell them a bit about what it was like to attend a one-room school. I realized it would probably take an hour to even begin to explain to these students how different the environment is now compared to the environment that I was involved in. Of course, I had no opportunity to explain to them some of the threats that they may be facing under this present government.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? Member for Durham, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. O'Toole: I want the indulgence of the House here. This afternoon my daughter and her fiancée were supposed to be here. I was going to introduce them because next week my daughter, Rochelle O'Toole, and her fiancée, Jason Traynor, are moving to the Isle of Man. I was going to put it on the official record here because they're leaving next Wednesday. It's a sad day in my life, one more of my three daughters moved out of the country. I hope it has nothing to do with me.

Anyway, I do want to thank the member from Hamilton East for her honesty and comments—I do look forward to her comments here very shortly—and also the member from Peterborough. He is a good friend of mine, in fact a good friend of ours.

Mike O'Toole retired as a justice of the peace in Peterborough. I was unfortunately unable to attend that reception. But he would know that most of the changes in education have a long history. I was a trustee for a couple of terms and was on the provincial board. The Royal Commission on Learning was started by Bob Rae. Basically, Minister of Education David Cooke was trying to

implement that. What our changes did was try to complete the Royal Commission on Learning, which was an extremely important document. I think all members should apprise themselves of that document.

One of the more controversial issues in that document was what you're talking about here today, the college of teachers. You see, as was mentioned earlier by the member for Mississauga, by definition, a profession is a self-regulating organization. It can't be dominated by a union; that's the whole issue. The integrity of the profession must be protected by its governance structure, and I think that's been missed in this bill somewhat. I'm not against unions. The OMA is the union of doctors and the college is the regulating body, and that's what needs to be followed. There are practices here that protect the professionalism of teachers.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant, a former teacher and very good friend of mine, with a master's degree in science, knows of education and its importance. Each of us here wants a better education, a better opportunity for our children. This bill seems to fail that mark.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms. Horwath: I have a number of issues that I wanted to raise and put on the record in regard to Bill 78, An Act to amend the Education Act, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996 and certain other statutes—statutes. “Statutes” reminds me of a funny joke, but I'm not going to tell it right now. My family, if they're watching, are laughing, because they've already heard it several times. Anyway, certain statutes related to education.

I wanted to read out the title of the bill because as I was reading through the comments of other members, particularly from my caucus and our lead critic in this area, Rosario Marchese from Trinity–Spadina, one of the first things he was indicating was that this of course is an omnibus bill. It's a bill that deals with a number of different areas of legislation, generally all within education. But certainly it is considered to be something of an omnibus bill. I thought it was important to once again raise the issue of the trouble that omnibus bills often create in that there might be pieces of omnibus bills that certain parties might be quite responsive to and quite supportive of. I'm not saying this is particularly the case here, but I am saying that when governments decide to bring forward legislation that's all patched together and that addresses a number of different areas, often you end up in a situation where the pieces that can't be supported are the ones that hold up the bill or hold up progressive or forward-moving action on other pieces of legislation. So I have to say that it's disappointing that something the government purports to have as such a high importance is brought forward in an omnibus fashion. Already the nature of omnibus legislation is that it's much more difficult to get the other parties to agree to it, because often-times there are pieces that are just not palatable at all. That was the first point I thought I should put on the record.

The other issue I'm going to talk about a little bit more later on is the way the government describes the bill as

being about student performance. That has come up many times, and many different members of the government side have described the bill in those terms, but unfortunately, if there's one thing that's educational about this bill, it's the Orwellian nature of the title and the Orwellian nature of the description that the Liberal members seem to bring forward when they talk about the bill. It's not dissimilar to the way we saw the previous government act in terms of the way they named legislation, as opposed to what the legislation really did.

For example, in this case the Liberals talk about this being to enhance the performance of students. I recall the legislation that the previous government brought forward called the Tenant Protection Act, which did anything but protect tenants. It's interesting how these Orwellian concepts that the previous government was famous for somehow have made their way into the current government's language about how they describe legislation that they are bringing forward. I'm going to talk about how it's a bit Orwellian to consider that this has anything to do with student performance a little later on, but there are two or three other issues that I wanted to put on the record.

One is the issue around the teacher induction program. Again, I think there has been some work done there; I believe that some teachers have indicated their acceptance of this model. That's something that I think, well, is out there, and we'll see what happens after implementation. But what is not talked about are the other issues around the teachers' situation.

The member from Durham was just talking about the college of teachers and his concern about the makeup of the college of teachers. Ours in fact is the opposite. We don't think the college of teachers needs to be restricted by a simple one-person majority. We believe that teachers actually are there doing their jobs, for the most part really committed to education, committed to making sure their college has extremely positive results and is very effective and very responsive to the teachers' role in the education process. So we don't think there was any need to restrict the number of teachers sitting on the college.

Having said that, the government is quite happy with the fact that they did the 50 plus one or the simple majority on the teacher representation, but what they did was they buckled to the pressure of the previous government, of the Tory members, the Conservatives, who are saying, and you heard it from the member for Durham, “Well, teachers can't be trusted. We don't like the unions. They shouldn't necessarily be in control.” So what did they do? Instead of ensuring that they were committed to their belief or instead of committing their talk about this new relationship and this new respect for teachers, instead of reflecting that in the legislation, what they've done is they have created this new oath that the teachers need to take when they are appointed to the college. So the teacher members, in fact all members of the college, need to take this oath that they are committed to the public interest in the application of their duties as members of the college.

1710

If you trust someone and you're saying, "We trust you. We have a new relationship where we have this new kind of back and forth, this new way of dealing with you that's based on respect and understanding and dialogue. We're going to appoint you to this body. We'll give you a slight majority on it, but you're going to have to make sure that you take an oath," what kind of trust is that, requiring an oath to be taken? The bottom line is, if you're going to be appointing people to this college, you're appointing them because you trust in their ability to undertake their duties responsibly and from a perspective of educators who are in this field and in these careers because they truly believe in what they are doing. That's enough for me. I don't understand why this oath has to be created. Nonetheless, the government has decided they have to take an oath because it's not good enough to trust them on their word that they are committed to their positions and they are going to do the right thing in being appointed to the college. They have to take an oath. Okay, fine, take an oath.

The other thing we don't hear about is that the government is also setting up this committee called the public interest committee that then is going to create the oath, oversee the oath, and make sure teachers are following the oath and that they're not going to be in positions of conflict of interest. So you trust teachers, you've got a new respectful relationship with them, you're doing all this great work around your relationship with teachers, but you're not going to give them what they wanted in terms of representation on the college, and if they do get appointed to the college, they have to take an oath. Then you're setting up a committee of a number of people, three to five people who I'm sure are going to be well paid, extra bureaucracy, who are going to be put in there to oversee the development and implementation of the oath and the conflict-of-interest guidelines for teachers who are appointed to the college.

All of those things don't sound like trust and respectful relationships. They sound like something totally different. When I talked earlier in one of my questions and comments about what the government says and what it does and how those two things are very different, that's a very clear example, in my opinion, of that situation. So when I say you have to peel back the layers, that is one layer that I think people need to acknowledge exists and was built into this legislation not by accident but purposely.

The other issue I wanted to raise before I get into details about my own community is the issue of the respect and partnership and all that same lingo that the Liberals like to use when they talk about trustees and the role of boards of education across the various communities.

I have to say that if you look at some of the measures in Bill 78 that deal with board compliance, that deal with the fact that the government has put in this bill—you know, one of the government members talked about, "We're not going to be like the previous government.

We're not going to have the big hammer." Well, you know what? The big hammer is in here. It's in here, and it's very clear that the boards of directors have certain duties that are expected of them, that are required of them. If they don't comply to the minister's satisfaction with the requirements in this bill, whether it's through regular kinds of edicts that the minister might from time to time put down or whether it's to do with special project funding or other kinds of initiatives that the government might be bringing forward, not only are boards liable in terms of sanctions and those kinds of things, but board members are actually individually liable. Board members can be taken to court. Board members can have major repercussions if they are not following by letter of the law, Bill 78, what the minister's edicts are.

I ask you again to consider—the Liberals like to talk about this new relationship. They like to talk about respect and they like to talk about the remuneration of trustees, which I think is an appropriate thing in terms of indicating their respect for and commitment to the important work that members of school boards undertake on behalf of the people of Ontario, on behalf of the students of Ontario. But what they don't tell you is that in fact the hammer that they are saying they got rid of is actually in here, and it's in here with a vengeance.

Again, it's really important that people in Ontario recognize that while the government spins out its message over here, the legislation they are tabling over here often has pieces in it that don't really match up with what they are saying in their media clips and in their announcements.

I thought it was really important for me to mention—I'm running out of time already—a couple of really important issues that have come to my attention. It goes back to the issue I was talking about at the beginning of my remarks, and that is the issue of the extent to which this really is about changing student performance, whether it's about increasing student performance, whether it's about increasing the experience or making more positive the experience of education in our community.

I wanted to start by reading some remarks that I received, not personally, but that were actually published in our local newspaper about three months ago. It was submitted by Judith Bishop, who is a trustee in the city of Hamilton public board, and this is what Judith says. This is not old news. This is current information:

"The major problem for all boards of education is salaries and benefits. The gap between the amount funded, and the actual amount paid in teachers' salaries in 2002 was approximately \$4,500 per teacher. In 2003-04, the gap in funding had grown to approximately \$6,000 per teacher"—going in the wrong direction. "Staff cannot be reduced because of collective agreements and class size regulations.

"In Hamilton, the gap is closed by using most of the local priority grants and taking \$1.3 million from French as a second language (this includes French immersion), \$1.8 million from English as a second language ...

and \$2.8 million from a grant intended for disadvantaged students and those at risk. Left unresolved, the gap is expected to increase by an average of at least 10% per year over the next three years.”

Well, do you know what? That problem is not addressed in Bill 78. That problem is not fixed in this bill, and it’s really inappropriate that the government claims that they fixed all the problems in education when reality tells us something quite different.

I’m going to go on, because there’s more.

“HWDSB”—Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board—“plans to complete nine new schools in the next few years. But new school construction funding benchmarks are still largely based on 1997 costs”—almost 10 years ago. “There will be a 25% shortfall (approximately \$22.5 million), which can only be made up from the sale of school buildings and lands. Details of the province’s new policy on school renovation and construction are still awaited.

“The uniqueness of Hamilton’s special education needs has not been reflected in funding. In 2003-04, the provincial average funding per student to cover the cost of providing intensive supports for students with high needs was \$471 per pupil. The amount for HWDSB was \$397 per pupil, 18% below the Ontario average. Although HWDSB has seen increased funding in the last two years, there is uncertainty over funding for the future,” and it’s still inadequate at this point in time.

“The funding for ESL students has increased a little, but HWDSB is concerned that it is not providing all of the supports needed for the children of government-assisted refugees, who have had little or no education in their first language.”

Transportation issues: “There is still no provincial standard for school transportation. Funding is essentially based on boards’ 1997 actual expenditure on transportation. HWDSB’s efficient transportation services have an average cost per pupil transported of \$2.50 per day. But not as much service is provided as some other boards. The promised new funding model is eagerly awaited....

“Clearly in 2005 the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board is not completely over its funding issues.” On this day, in 2006, it remains the same.

It’s interesting, because that description of what’s happening in Hamilton is a specific reflection of the broader concerns that were raised by the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association in a position paper they recently published. They say they are “concerned that the shortfalls in some education funding lines have forced some school boards to draw from discretionary areas of funding, especially when that area is English as a second language. We want to see changes in funding that make this unnecessary. We want to see school boards be able to balance their budgets and still spend every single ESL dollar on services for immigrant children.” I want to see that too. The Liberals talk about how they want to see that but they don’t do anything in Bill 78 to make that happen, and that’s a big problem.

Another thing that the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association talks about is English and French: “In two

years or less a child can have a level of fluency that allows her to easily carry on a conversation. But it takes from five to seven years to master the nuances of language that instruction in our schools is based on. Current funding in the province goes to four years but it is not the same amount for each of those years.” In other words, “There is a big drop in the level of funding from year one to year four.” This is a problem. They need to see “a more realistic time frame to make sure that immigrant children have every chance to succeed in school.”

Again, the government talks about those kinds of principles, talks about those kinds of values, but they don’t implement them. You cannot trust the Liberals to implement what they say they’re doing. When they bring in legislation like Bill 78 and it doesn’t cover these fundamental issues of English as a second language, French immersion—that’s another one that’s come up in my community, and I’m just going to read you something that has come from some French immersion issues in the Catholic school board or the separate school board in the city of Hamilton.

1720

What’s happened in the separate school board in the city of Hamilton is that a parents committee had to be established. They established themselves as an interest group to try to lobby their school board because the Catholic school board is diverting French immersion funds out of the French immersion program to take care of other needs that the school has. I was made aware of this by Kaywana Gargarello, who has been a leader in our community on this issue. In fact, she indicates that it’s reflected in the very beginning of the French immersion program, in their senior kindergarten program. It now says on the school board site that the senior kindergarten program is 50% English and 50% French, but it used to say that it was predominantly in French. What Ms. Gargarello was asking was, why was that changed? “What little French we have in [the] program is being ‘watered down’ with seemingly no effort to put anything back.”

So again, another problem with the fact that French immersion, ESL, and special needs are all being siphoned off; those dollars are being moved to take care of the funding formula problems that this government has still refused to address in the province of Ontario. Bill 78 doesn’t do anything for those funding formula problems. Whether it’s the basic funding formula, whether it’s the transportation funding formula or whether it’s the capital funding formula, they’re all still a mess, and Bill 78 doesn’t even touch them.

There was one last issue that I wanted to raise because I think it’s another piece that the government is missing completely. This is about a program that was funded in two schools in Hamilton but was funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation, because at least they figured out some important things that need to be done for First Nations children in the community of Hamilton. The article from the Hamilton Spectator—and I really encourage people to have a look at it, because you can learn

something from it—was published back in March, just a couple of weeks ago. It talks about a young woman from an aboriginal community who had given up on school. She wasn't successful and she was tired of going to school and feeling like a failure, so she took to the streets of Hamilton and basically gave up on her education:

"Last September, she took a look at her life and decided she didn't like what she saw. She started going to her classes at Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School, where she is enrolled in Nya:weh, a unique program designed to keep aboriginal teens in school.

"This is the first year I've actually done good,' says Skye. 'I'm very proud of myself for the school work I've done.'"

It goes on to describe some of her accomplishments and it talks about the program:

"Nya:weh was started with a grant of about \$222,000 from Hamilton Community Foundation. That funding is about to run out. So Rehill," who is the principal of Sir John A. Macdonald school, "and members of the Hamilton Executive Directors Aboriginal Coalition (HEDAC), which oversees Nya:weh, have gone to the city's two school boards. They need \$80,000 a year to keep Hill and Cabezas and to pay a half-time outreach officer to hook up with likely Nya:weh candidates."

There is a real investment that makes a difference in the lives of aboriginal students, and although this government, again, talks about their relationship with First Nations communities, they are doing nothing to help aboriginal students. Certainly I didn't see anything in Bill 78 that deals with the issue of aboriginal students being able to stay in school.

"There has been an entire generation of our community lost to the intergenerational effects of residential schools.... This program has re-engaged the aboriginal community by allowing them to embrace both traditional and western education styles."

Interjections.

Ms. Horwath: They obviously don't care about aboriginal students, Mr. Speaker, because they're really making a lot of noise and I can't even concentrate on sharing with the people of Ontario some of the important programs that people are undertaking—not the people here in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans): On the cover of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association newsletter called Agenda, it says "Omnibus Bill Aims to Improve Education Performance."

The member from Hamilton East, who spoke previously, also called it an omnibus bill, so I'd like to clear that part up. There were a lot of other inaccuracies as well, but I would just like to say that an omnibus bill is one that packages together several measures into one or combines diverse subjects into a single bill, and this is not the type of bill that we call an omnibus bill. I wasn't here during the previous government, but I guess there were some great ones that were brought forward by that

government. It shouldn't be referred to as such. This bill deals only with education-related measures. It is a substantive housekeeping bill with three focuses: enhancing student performance, partnership based on respect—that's new in the schools since we became the government—and openness to the public.

On a number of occasions, the—

Interjection.

Mr. McNeely: Actually I was a teacher, but it's back 50 years ago, so I'm not going to get into my teaching abilities today.

The previous government combined unrelated and multi-ministry initiatives into one bill in order to hide certain negative aspects of a piece of legislation. That's not what we're doing here. With this bill go many measures to improve education in Ontario. The bill hides nothing and deals exclusively with positive education initiatives. The McGuinty government has made, and continues to make, incredible progress in the area of education. This bill will help make even more progress and will help our students to learn and accomplish even more in their classrooms.

Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka): It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech from the member for Hamilton East on Bill 78, which is the Education Statute Law Amendment Act, 2006. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke earlier this afternoon brought up an issue that I would like to briefly talk about, and that is school buses and rural areas.

Earlier this week, we had the Ontario School Bus Association visiting Queen's Park. I met with some representatives, and they're very concerned with the lack of support for school buses and school bus drivers in the province. They've been neglected. They were just about finished working on a new funding formula for school buses when this government came to power three years ago, and that's disappeared. There have been no increases except for some very specific one-time funding increases; there hasn't been anything over the long term.

I have to ask: If you're in a rural area, who's the first person your child will see in the morning on their way to school? It's the bus driver. If you're not looking after those drivers well because the funding is not sufficient to be able to retain drivers and keep them happy in their job, then that's not a very good start to the day, or finish to the day, in terms of the children. I would say there are safety concerns as well when we're not funding those school buses properly. We need to pay attention to those school bus operators and address this problem, because it is becoming very critical, particularly in the rural areas around Ontario.

Mr. Mario Sergio (York West): I'd like to add a couple of words on the bill that is being discussed this afternoon. Of course, the member from Hamilton East is a very harsh defender of her community and she works very hard. I know she does a good job in the House in the readings of the bills and we much value the contribution she makes in the debate.

To deviate, because this is very educational as well, with respect to what has taken place in Italy Sunday and

yesterday, I should say that it's a very important time because we are looking at ways of changing our own electoral system here. Yesterday was the last day for voting in the election in Italy, and for the first time we have—

Interjection.

Mr. Sergio: This is important because we have for the first time, or they have given for the first time, the right to vote to Italian immigrants throughout the boundaries of North America, if you can believe it. Can you see North America as one region? I find that very hard to comprehend, but I would say, congratulations to the Italians for creating a wonderful mess, and congratulations to those who were elected, both to the Senate and the chamber.

I have to say, with respect to Bill 78, that since we've been elected, we have done a darned good job. I have to congratulate the Ministers of Education and the Premier for saying, "We've got to make some changes. We've got to get away from the cuts, chaos and confrontation." This will go a long way to bringing peace and contentment to the classroom.

1730

Mr. Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to comment on the speech by the member from Hamilton East. The one part I would concur in with the member from York West is that the member from Hamilton East is an excellent member and a hard worker, very diligent about bringing issues to the House and very passionate about the way she presents them. She was no less passionate about her problems with this bill today either.

Of course, from the member for Ottawa–Orléans you would think the bill is perfect, everything is just great. Everything this government seems to do is perfect. I would say it is more like what the member from York West said about the recent Italian elections: They've made quite a mess. This government makes a mess of just about everything.

The previous education minister hadn't really brought a substantive piece of legislation to this House in his two and a half, almost three, years as minister. He made all kinds of deals. He spent a lot of money. He bought the unions. He had no problem doing that with taxpayers' money. But he had not brought a substantive piece of legislation, and he wanted to use this to springboard his desire to be the federal Liberal leader. However, time being what it is—and it is what it is—he didn't get this bill passed in time. So now it's left to the new education minister and all those people who line up in rows to be complimentary of the government because they're told to do so, to see that we get this bill through this Legislature.

It is going to pass; make no mistake about it. We've got the desire and the will, and we believe we have the evidence, but unfortunately we don't have the numbers. This bill is going to pass. Like so many other bills this government has brought forward, this really is a further sellout of the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Hamilton East, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Horwath: I want to thank the members from Ottawa–Orléans, Parry Sound–Muskoka, York West and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their comments.

I find it interesting, though, that the member from York West was talking about the Italian election. My partner is Italian, and of course he was sitting on the edge of his chair for the last couple of days wondering how that election was going to come forward.

The other thing that surprised me was the use of the words "harsh defender," and the responses from some of the Liberal members. From the perspective of a woman, being called harsh is obviously a critical comment, although I appreciate the comments from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. "Authoritative, passionate and concerned" are all things that I think are appropriate language to use when you're describing the activities of a member when they are trying to inform other members of this House about the concerns they have in their community. Whether it has to do with education or any other matter that comes before this House, I think it's my obligation, and one I take seriously. If I get a little bit passionate, particularly when being heckled by some of the rump over here—it's probably their job to get me off my game—if my tone gets a little bit passionate, it's something that's required of me because I don't think it's funny when we're talking about programs and opportunities for aboriginal youth in our communities to be able to succeed at school. When people are making fun of those kinds of initiatives, I think it's a little bit inappropriate.

So I will continue to be authoritative in my language and passionate in my approach, because I think it's extremely important to bring that kind of vigour to the discussion and debate. I certainly think it's something the members who were heckling in the other benches need to take some consideration of, particularly when they use language—I don't think the member from York West particularly meant that word in a negative way, but I know the hecklers did.

The Deputy Speaker: This might be an appropriate time for those who are assembled here, and maybe those who are watching and those who read Hansard, to remind ourselves that the two-minute responses are not an opportunity to speak out on various subjects. The two-minute responds are supposed to be to the business that's before the House.

Mr. Sergio: I'll take that back.

The Deputy Speaker: No, not at all. Notwithstanding that they are well-intentioned, it's something we spoke of recently at a Speakers' meeting that perhaps we should be reminded of. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. McNeely: I don't think it's correct that any of us in this House heckled any of the comments that had to do with the needs of the aboriginal community. I'm sure that is important to all members of this Legislature, and that was not fact.

One of the things that I want to let the member from Pembroke etc. know is that I was a teacher. I taught in

Castleford for a year. I was 18 years old. That was an important part of my upbringing. I must say that the people of Castleford and Renfrew are great people. I still have friends up there—the Humphries boys whom I taught in school. They learned a great deal—eight grades in that school, 30 kids. It was my first year of teaching, so we had a great year in Castleford.

What I wanted to talk about today is the importance of this legislation and the importance of what this government has done to change the whole atmosphere in the schools in our province. I was at Orleans Wood public school the other day. I try to get into two or three schools a month. This was a grade 5 class in civics. Before it started, the teacher said, “Take a message back to the minister. Let them know that we really appreciate what they’re doing in schools. And especially, I just got my money for my new book supply. I haven’t bought them yet.” She was very thankful for that. The whole atmosphere in the schools that I see is a great atmosphere. It’s peace and stability. We’re concerned with student performance, teacher excellence, modernizing education, but there’s the respect for the teachers, parents, boards, trustees and students.

The trustees were put in the position—they were, I think, overruled with the public school board in the Ottawa area.

Mr. Leal: Eight years of dictatorship.

Mr. McNeely: They came in with a dictatorship and ran the system, and really hurt a great system. The arts were very important to the Ottawa school board. There were a lot of good programs in the school system. It was tough for the trustees; it was tough for the parents; it was tough for the teachers. Thank God that we’re through that situation. This bill is just going to make a lot of improvements that we need.

Included in this bill are measures that will revitalize the Ontario College of Teachers by increasing the number of teacher members on the governing council of the college by six. This comes to something that I spoke on before when it comes to engineers. We have 67,000 engineers in this province, and they’re supposed to be self-governing. That’s what I think the minister was trying to do. The benefits of a successful college to Ontario students should be obvious: highly skilled, motivated teachers who are held in high regard by the public at large. That’s so important. That’s where we’ve come to.

The self-governing nature of professions is also important. They will police themselves. They will do a good job. That’s where we’re going to.

Minister Kennedy told the delegates when he made that statement that student performance legislation also would add two additional professional activity days, bringing the total to six annually, “recognizing that teacher development is not just acquiring knowledge of teaching skills but sustaining motivation and innovation as well.” That’s so important. We have to get into programs that teachers—in any of the professions, they do it. It’s continual quality improvement. It’s extremely im-

portant that the teachers have the time, that they are going in that direction and becoming better teachers in better schools.

We have done a lot in that regard. We’ve lowered class sizes. We have long-term collective teacher agreements. That peace in the classroom is so important. Formal on-the-job learning is a second step in teachers’ professional development. Teacher performance appraisals improve teacher development. A revitalized college of teachers has the confidence of its members and the public and is de-politicized in its outlook. The trustee respect is very important too. That’s coming back. We’re going to have better trustees because they’re going to be able to have more authority and more decision-making powers.

1740

The changes in the education system are very obvious. Anyone who denies that is not going into the schools in this province. If you go into the schools, you know what the changes are; you know that the teachers are working in an environment that is going to give us much better education in this province.

Teacher training: This bill will revoke the ineffective Ontario teacher qualifying test introduced by the former government. It will be replacing the pen-and-paper test with mentors and classroom experience. In its place, we’ll introduce a positive second step for beginning teachers called the new teacher induction program. This will provide teachers with valuable in-class support during their challenging first year of practice and will create that atmosphere for those teachers to get confidence. That is much more important than trying to assess them after they’ve gotten into problems.

All these changes are very important to the province of Ontario and to the kids who are in the classrooms. They’re obvious if you go into your classrooms today. I really am supportive of this legislation and look forward to its passage in this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr. Tascona: I’m very pleased to once again join in the debate here in response to the member from Ottawa–Orléans. I’m going to be speaking on this shortly, I believe, because there’s plenty of time to speak on this. Certainly the areas we’re talking about are fundamental changes in many ways with respect to how education is going to be handled in this province.

When you go through this in a cursory fashion, you don’t really pick up the nuances of the powers that are going to be with the minister. That’s one thing the member hasn’t spoken about. The minister has taken great powers and has imposed, “jointly and severally,” liability on individual board members—trustees, if you will—in terms of not following the orders of the minister. That’s something that has not really been spoken of. I’m going to mention it when I start speaking on it, because I think that’s pretty significant in terms of the liability that is now being imposed by the minister in terms of not following that person’s orders.

There is one other area that I’ve spoken about but not in great detail: the new teachers’ induction. I think that

for the principal who is going to be responsible for administering this act this will be a massive headache in terms of dealing with new teacher induction, new teacher performance appraisal and new teacher termination. There are some very interesting provisions in there with respect to the termination of a contract of a new teacher that are going to bring a lot of litigation regarding the handling of new teachers, be it induction, performance appraisal or termination. From a principal's point of view, it's certainly making the load heavier with respect to the enormous duties that principals already have in the system.

Ms. Horwath: It's my pleasure to have a few comments on the debate by the member from Ottawa-Orléans. I think he did a good job. He did his duty in terms of making sure the pieces of this bill that the government wants to have highlighted were brought to the fore in his debate. He took a couple of minutes to do that and did an admirable job in terms of bringing forward the issues that were his responsibility.

But I still believe that the bill itself could have done a lot of different things, and in fact has done some things that are not ones the government prefers to highlight. I can talk about them again, if you want. If people out there are not aware of my initial comments not too long ago, there are issues around what happens to the trustees if they don't follow the letter of the law, as it's brought down by the government, in terms of measures that they are now responsible for. The ramifications of not doing so are quite severe. There are also issues around the extent to which the performance of students is going to be affected by this bill as opposed to by a bill or by actions on behalf of this government that would address the problems with funding formulas, that would address the problems that school boards continue to have with the hiving off of dollars that are supposed to go to programs like ESL, like French immersion, like special needs, but are instead used to fill the gaps in funding that exist in the funding formula, in the construction formula, in the transportation formula and other salary gaps that exist that are endemic to the education system. Until those are addressed, the bill is simply not going to do what the government says it's going to do.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest): I just wanted to comment briefly on the remarks made by the member from Ottawa-Orléans. I know I heard from one of the opposition members, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, that Liberals don't want to speak to this bill. We want to speak to this bill. We also want to hear from the opposition. If we take up all our 20-minute time periods, then we're not going to allow you guys to have your time to speak, and I want to hear from Joe Tascona, the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. We're getting close to 6 o'clock, and if we used up all our 10 minutes, we wouldn't hear that.

Mr. Yakabuski: This isn't your last day here, is it, Lorenzo?

Mr. Berardinetti: No, it's not my last day here.

The bottom line is that this is Bill 78, and Bill 78 speaks to improving the education system in Ontario. I

think the member from Ottawa-Orléans made it clear in his speech that there are aspects in this bill that are clearly meant to improve the relationship with teachers and with this government. But the more important question and the more important issue and the more important substance here is the student. This bill—and I think the member from Ottawa-Orléans made it clear in his speech—improves the student and increases the student's performance. It allows for increased student performance. That's what our goal is.

You want to call this omnibus? Give me a break. When the Tories were in government, they introduced massive omnibus bills that basically destroyed Toronto. Did the Tories debate those bills? I don't think they did. We're debating them. We're willing to take this to committee. What kind of committee hearings did the Tories have when they dealt with that? So I'm proud of this bill. I'm proud it's going to go to committee, and I'm proud it's going to come back for third reading. We debate on third reading, unlike the Tories.

Mr. Yakabuski: I'd like to comment on the short address by the member for Ottawa-Orléans. The minister's office must be giving very short speaking notes these days to the Liberal members, because if this bill—and we have 20 minutes as a member to speak to this bill. He could only muster up seven minutes of speaking time on this bill. I can only assume—and I have talked about this bill clearly in my opportunities. If seven out of 20 is the best you can score on a bill, even in your teaching days, member for Ottawa-Orléans, seven out of 20 is not a passing grade. You're only giving it seven out of 20 minutes.

I suggest that if this is what the members of the Liberal caucus are willing to stand up and speak in support of, their ex-minister's bill—who, of course, has flown the coop and is now trolling for votes across the country. If that's the best they can do, they might want to send this back and get a rewrite, because I can tell you that when we have an opportunity to speak for 20 minutes on this bill, it's not enough time to articulate the problems and the oversights in this bill, simply because the ex-minister wanted to have something with his name on it before he left.

So I really have to ask the members of the government side: Seven minutes out of 20? Maybe eight? Maybe 10? You've got to show the new minister more support. If you really want to get this bill, you've got to show the new minister more support, or you have to clearly say, "Look, we don't really support this bill. We're being told to get out here and support it, but in fact we just wish you'd withdraw it and try again." If they're willing to take another look—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Ottawa-Orléans, you have two minutes to respond.

1750

Mr. McNeely: I'd like to thank the members for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Hamilton East, Scarborough Southwest and Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, although I

think that if he did speak on this bill for 20 minutes, the content was probably worth two and the bluster was 18. I felt I put good content into my seven minutes, and I hope the people here listened to that.

We have to look at this bill in the context of what it has done already to our schools. Minister Kennedy, who did an admirable job for two and a half years—this government has the confidence of teachers, has the confidence of parents, has the confidence of the school kids and has the confidence of the trustees. This province is moving ahead with not all that pointing that occurred over so many years, where the teachers in the system were the culprits. They were professionals who were bullied for six, seven or eight years. We've got a new era in our schools. It's great, it's the way to go—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. McNeely: It's a great way to go. We only have to go into those schools today. I said that before and I'll say it again: The proof is in every school in this province.

We've had complaining about the investments from the member for Hamilton East. Those investments are in the school system. They're showing up in the school system. The teachers are telling us that they're there. We are absolutely on the right path. The new minister, who has great experience in this House, whom our caucus has great confidence in, is going to take up the good work that Gerard Kennedy has done over the last two and a half years. We're on the right track. Our schools will be better. This province and our kids will be much better for it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr. Tascona: I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to Bill 78. As I indicated earlier, in a way this is a bit of legislative drafting in terms of how you change the standards or how you weaken the standards. I'll give you a case in point.

In the bill, there used to be a statutory provision which indicated what the class size had to be. That has been changed now. They've repealed the statutory provision and now have given the minister the powers, under regulation, to determine the class size. In essence, the minister is actually using his powers even more broadly than was previously in the bill, in terms of determining how they're going to determine class size and what that will mean. In terms of legislative drafting, there really isn't any change, other than the fact that the ministers have actually given themselves more power with respect to dealing with class sizes.

As I indicated before, one area which I think has to be subject to public hearings, when we get there, is this information on collection of personal information. They've added a new section to the Education Act which allows a minister to "collect, directly or indirectly, such personal information as is ... necessary for purposes related to,

"(a) administering this act and the regulations ...

"(b) ensuring compliance with this act, the regulations ...

"(c) planning or delivering programs or services that the ministry provides or funds ...

"(d) risk management ...

"(e) research and statistical activities conducted by or on behalf of the ministry."

That's an area that we really need to flesh out in terms of what that really means, what they're trying to accomplish with respect to collecting personal information, because there is a proviso in there that also deals with required or authorized disclosure under the freedom of information and privacy acts where they're giving sort of deemed consent where that's dealt with with respect to certain institutions. That's a very fundamental change and, as I indicated before, also there's a fundamental change in terms of failure to follow ministerial orders. They deal with joint and civil liability for members of the board. I want to cite that particular provision. It basically says:

"Personal liability of members of boards

"(3) If a board that is subject to an order made under subsection 230.3(2) applies any of its funds otherwise than as the minister orders or authorizes, the members of the board who voted for the application are jointly and severally liable for the amount so applied, which may be recovered in a court of competent jurisdiction."

That's a fairly broad section, but it definitely gives the minister some real power in dealing with members of the board who don't follow an order or what the minister has authorized with respect to the allocation of funds. I wouldn't call it a punitive measure, but certainly it is a measure that deals with allocation-of-funding liability for members of the board that wasn't there before. That's a new provision. If I was a member of the board, I would be asking, "What do you mean there? You're saying I'm jointly and severally liable for something you authorized that I fundamentally don't agree with, or that you ordered, which may have happened after the fact and which I didn't know about before I voted."

Members of the board may have been given a carrot with respect to, "We're going to give you some more money, because we're giving the minister authority under the regulation powers to give you some more money," but at the same time, "If you don't follow what I want to do, you're going to be jointly and severally liable," which to me is a measure that I think board members are going to have to look at very closely.

One other aspect that I want to comment on before our time is over is the headache that principals are being given with respect to new teachers. I do not know why they are going into such detail with respect to new teacher induction, new teacher performance appraisal and new teacher termination. I think that's something that has to be looked at in terms of how principals can handle that and what they're trying to accomplish with respect to new teachers, because it doesn't apply to other teachers who are currently in the system with respect to education. That's an area that really has to be dealt with in terms of what you're trying to accomplish with bringing new people into the profession. If I was a new teacher and I

was looking at all the powers they're going to have over me with respect to how I'm going to teach and their powers of termination, I'd be a little bit concerned with how they're going to deal with my employment and my prospects for career advancement in that area.

In this bill there is also information with respect to student trustees, once again giving the minister power to make regulations. What we're dealing with here is a bill that is essentially giving regulation power to the minister to deal with a lot of areas. Instead of just saying, "Okay, here's how we're going to deal with it," the minister is giving himself regulation power to deal with a lot of different areas. That's fine and dandy, but the problem with regulations is that they're not subject to the scrutiny of the House. The minister is able to do things we would never know about unless we were reading about them in the Ontario Gazette. I don't think it's good for democracy that you can do things that will change class sizes, do things with student trustees, new teachers, existing trustees and other areas of this bill that you want to deal with, and you deal with it through regulation. I think that's an area that is getting away from the House in terms of our scrutiny and how we want to deal with

education. It's something that's obviously going to be pointed out when we deal with this in the public hearings that are going to happen.

One of the areas I mentioned that I have real concerns about is this new teacher induction and also the rating of teachers. I'm also concerned with respect to this personal information. I don't know what we're trying to accomplish here in terms of what the minister is really about. I think it's important that we find out what that minister wants with that information, because I believe that if it's basically to do profiling or some other statistics gathering exercise to set out an education agenda with respect to what the minister wants to do, I don't think that's in the best interests of the public education system, though the minister is given broad powers with respect to making regulations re the provincial interest in a number of different areas I can go through in terms of what the minister wants to do.

The Deputy Speaker: We have reached the time of 6 of the clock. This House is adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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