



ISSN 1180-436X

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 38th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 38^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 26 October 2006

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 26 octobre 2006

**Standing committee on
the Legislative Assembly**

Education Statute Law
Amendment Act
(Learning to Age 18), 2006

**Comité permanent de
l'Assemblée législative**

Loi de 2006 modifiant des lois
en ce qui concerne l'éducation
(apprentissage jusqu'à l'âge
de 18 ans)

Chair: Bob Delaney
Clerk: Tonia Grannum

Président : Bob Delaney
Greffière : Tonia Grannum

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Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE
L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Thursday 26 October 2006

Jeudi 26 octobre 2006

The committee met at 0902 in room 151.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

The Chair (Mr. Bob Delaney): Good morning, everyone. This is the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. We are here to consider Bill 52, An Act to amend the Education Act respecting pupil learning to the age of 18 and equivalent learning and to make complementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act.

Our first order of business this morning is the reading in of the report of the subcommittee. Mr. Klees, would you like to read the subcommittee report?

Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): Chair, if you are asking me to do that, I'm compelled, then, to do that:

(1) That the committee meet for public hearings in Toronto on Thursday, October 26, 2006, during its regularly scheduled meeting time, and that if necessary the committee request permission from the House leaders to sit in the morning to accommodate additional witnesses.

(2) That the clerk of the committee post information regarding public hearings on Bill 52 on the Ontario parliamentary channel and the committee's website.

(3) That the clerk of the committee place an ad in the Toronto dailies and in all the GTA weeklies.

(4) That interested parties who wish to be considered to make an oral presentation on Bill 52 contact the clerk of the committee by 5 p.m. on Monday, October 23, 2006.

(5) That if all witnesses cannot be accommodated, the clerk provide the subcommittee members with the list of witnesses who have requested to appear, by 5:30 p.m. Monday, October 23, 2006, and that the caucuses provide the clerk with a prioritized list of witnesses to be scheduled, by 12 p.m. on Tuesday, October 24, 2006.

(6) That the deadline for written submissions on Bill 52 be 5 p.m. on Thursday, October 26, 2006.

(7) That all witnesses be offered a maximum of 10 minutes for their presentation.

(8) That the research officer provide the committee with a summary of public hearings by 12 p.m. on Monday, October 30, 2006.

(9) That for administrative purposes, proposed amendments should be filed with the clerk of the committee by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, October 31, 2006.

(10) That the committee meet for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 52 on Thursday, November 2, 2006.

(11) That the clerk of the committee, in consultation with the Chair, be authorized prior to the adoption of the report of the subcommittee to commence making any preliminary arrangements necessary to facilitate the committee's proceedings.

The Chair: May I have a motion to adopt the report of the subcommittee?

Interjection.

The Chair: Mr. Racco. All in favour? Opposed? Carried.

**EDUCATION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT**

(LEARNING TO AGE 18), 2006

**LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ÉDUCATION
(APPRENTISSAGE JUSQU'À L'ÂGE
DE 18 ANS)**

Consideration of Bill 52, An Act to amend the Education Act respecting pupil learning to the age of 18 and equivalent learning and to make complementary amendments to the Highway Traffic Act / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation concernant l'apprentissage des élèves jusqu'à l'âge de 18 ans et l'apprentissage équivalent et apportant des modifications complémentaires au Code de la route.

OLGA KAMMEL

The Chair: Our first presentation is from Mr. Dan Sheeler for Olga Kammel. Is Mr. Sheeler here? Thank you very much. Please sit down and make yourself comfortable. You'll have 10 minutes for your deputation this morning. Begin by identifying yourself for Hansard and then proceed.

Mr. Dan Sheeler: Good morning. My name is Dan Sheeler. I'm a teacher at Ancaster High School in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. I am presenting on behalf of Olga Kammel, a colleague and fellow teacher at Ancaster High School in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board:

"I would like to thank the legislative standing committee for giving me the opportunity to address you this

morning. As fate would have it, at dinner last evening I asked a waiting colleague to join our table. As she left our meal, she presented us with a handwritten haiku poem:

“By chance we meet here;
 “You invite me to join you
 “Ah, conversation!

“I found the poem not only topical to today’s invited public discussion concerning the proposed Bill 52, the Education Statute Law Amendment Act (Learning to Age 18), 2006, but also a symbolic reminder of public discourse’s importance prior to enacting any far-reaching amendments, such as those contained within Bill 52. Specifically, I believe Bill 52’s equivalent and dual-credit programs erode both curricular legitimacy and public trust. Unfortunately, once lost, both are difficult to regain.

“As a teacher in the Ontario public education system, I firmly believe in the right for every student to have access to an equitable, valued, rigorous education based on an accepted curriculum delivered by certified, experienced and passionate teachers. After all, there is a reason that the Ministry of Education mandates that ‘to be considered for employment as an elementary or secondary school teacher in a publicly funded Ontario school,’ applicants ‘must have a permanent or interim certificate of qualification.’ That reason, then, is trust—a trust in the authenticity and equity of the curriculum.

“Unfortunately, Bill 52’s introduction of dual-credit courses and equivalent learning programs eliminates this deeply rooted trust. No longer can students and parents rest assured that the education being received is a sanctioned, supported and tested curriculum delivered by self-, system- and professionally regulated and certified teachers. Indeed, public trust in teacher capacity is so important that we have the Ontario College of Teachers serve as a regulatory, even disciplinary, body. Along with the standards of practice and ethical standards for the teaching profession, the Ontario College of Teachers exists to assure the public that their daughter or son is receiving an education delivered by professionals. These professionals, then, ensure their children are prepared lifelong learners.

“Should equivalent credit programs and dual-credit courses occur, who will reassure the public that the instruction their children are receiving is applicable and relevant? How will these external providers be monitored and regulated? What resources will be available should they prove unsuitable? Lastly, what are the health and safety supports for students who encounter problems while taking part in these outsourcing programs?

“Logistically, in a time when we are using standardized assessment tools such as the OSSLT to identify baselines for students’ needs, is it not hypocritical that we would adopt a system which eliminates curricular checks and balances? How will the government answer the public’s inquiry as to the credit legitimacy and course consistency when projected dual-credit time allotments

range from 45 to 65 hours, a 50% reduction from the ministry’s mandated 110-hour requirement? For although enduring learnings can be taught in an abbreviated fashion, such programs presuppose that students do not need time for review, repetition or revision. As an experienced classroom teacher, I assure the committee that this is not the case. Students succeed when they understand, and students understand when they have the time and opportunities to succeed.

“Of course, this is not to suggest that all alternate education providers are incapable of transmitting valuable knowledge and skills, but rather that the varying nature of workplace employers and non-reviewed post-secondary providers cannot commit the time teachers do in developing, honing and upgrading their education-specific knowledge and skills. Indeed, that is why our consistently subscribed co-operative education programs work well to integrate academic skills and work experiences, the only difference being that co-op programs are delivered in conjunction with certified teachers. These teachers evaluate students to see that they understand and demonstrate the connection between their secondary school and workplace experiences, all the while filtering and observing workplace employers to ensure that students are safe.

“As a case in point, since becoming a certified teacher, I have worked diligently to improve my educational training so that I can better assist the multi-faceted students I educate every day. Specifically, I received my master’s in education; junior, intermediate and senior qualifications; ESL part 1 and 2 and specialist; dramatic arts honour specialist; as well as guidance parts 1 and 2. I entered teaching believing that teaching is a lifestyle. I still believe that to this day. Unfortunately, I also believe that this mentality, through no fault of the external providers, is not necessarily shared. Simply, teachers model how to become lifelong learners. Thus I object to any program that removes and isolates students from this educational community.

0910

“Regarding the public’s demand for curricular legitimacy, in 2003, the Ministry of Education established a schedule for ongoing curriculum review. As noted on their website, ‘Each year, a number of subject areas enter the review process to ensure that they are kept current, relevant and age-appropriate.’ I agree with the ministry’s belief that because so much is at stake, reviews are conducted with great care and that comprehensive information gathering occurs from numerous stakeholders.

“But an as-yet-unanswered question remains: Will these equivalent and dual-credit courses face the same rigorous review? Can they? If so, who will oversee this responsibility and how will it be reported to the public?

“Indeed, Bill 52’s apparent need is to increase our province’s graduation rate to 85%. However, I would suggest that an OSSD that consists of watered-down, unregulated, varied and questionable credits does little to prepare students for the challenges ahead. I urge this committee to avoid the pitfalls of both seductive statistics

and suggestive language. Opposing Bill 52 is not an attack on student success; rather, such opposition is a defence against programs that threaten to limit outgoing students' lifelong success.

"As a certified teacher, I assure you that I and all of my professional colleagues are student success teachers, and I would add that our interest and dedication toward achieving student success has never wavered. A vote against Bill 52 is a vote for a legitimate, equitable, accountable public education.

"In closing, Bill 52 breaks the public's trust. It does so by unjustifiably altering the currently accepted understanding that an OSSD is granted based on the assessment, evaluation and reporting of certified, passionate teachers delivering an established, reviewed curriculum.

"I would like to thank the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly for hearing my concerns today. I hope that today's conversation invites alternative ideas on how best to improve our public education."

The Chair: Thank you for coming in. We should have time for one very brief question and associated answer.

Mr. Klees: Mr. Sheeler, thank you for your presentation. You've raised very specific questions relating to the equivalent and dual-credit courses. Specifically, will these equivalent and dual-credit courses face the same rigorous review—can they?—and if so, who will oversee the responsibility and how will it be reported to the public? If you were to get specific answers to that, would you support this bill?

Mr. Sheeler: No. I still wouldn't support the bill in its current phase, and the reason for that is, despite ensuring more equitable public trust in terms of reviewing said courses, I still deny that these courses have value because of the constricted timelines, the safety concerns connected to out-sourced students not being attached to certified teachers and also the questionable curricular validity of the courses from the very onset.

The Chair: Thank you for taking the time to come in to make your presentation this morning.

The clerk advises that the deputation by Eugene Spanier has been cancelled.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 25,
OTTAWA-CARLETON TEACHERS'
BARGAINING UNIT

The Chair: Our next deputant is the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, district 25, Ottawa-Carleton. Is Kerry Houlahan in the room?

Good morning, and welcome. Make yourself comfortable. You'll have 10 minutes to make your deputation this morning. If you leave any time, it will be divided among the parties for questions. Please begin by identifying yourself for Hansard and then proceed.

Ms. Kerry Houlahan: Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to present this morning. My name is Kerry Houlahan. I am president of the teachers' bargaining unit for OSSTF in Ottawa-Carleton. I rep-

resent approximately 1,800 teachers and will be using the OSSTF submission as the basis for my presentation this morning.

Let me begin by saying this bill is not needed. Some of our students benefit from equivalent learning opportunities and we already have appropriate provisions in place to offer those alternative learning opportunities properly. We must respect the rigour of the OSSD—the Ontario secondary school diploma—credit system while doing so and ensure the direct involvement of certified secondary teachers.

I would like to share with you this morning some of the successful equivalent learning opportunities currently offered in Ottawa-Carleton that meet the intentions expressed in Bill 52.

Trading Places, for instance, is a joint venture with the ministry of justice. It allows students to meet their academic curricular needs, as well as developing skills in a specific trade such as carpentry or bricklaying. It does so through the framework of an academic teacher and a trades teacher with support from educational assistants. It is imperative that these at-risk students benefit from the specialized training of both certified and qualified teachers and qualified educational assistants.

As well, we offer a house-building program at eight sites in our board. Students receive high school credits while developing their skills in the construction trade. The program includes a short in-class component at the beginning and then provides the opportunity to spend all day on a construction site. The students involved in this program require the supervision of teachers. Again, these potentially at-risk students benefit from the teachers who are trained to support their needs. Students who successfully complete this program are motivated to earn their remaining credits and have gained valuable, practical skills.

In Ottawa-Carleton, there are currently four alternate sites. The alternate program provides a less structured environment, which requires a focus on individual responsibility on the part of the student. Students concentrate their efforts on one credit at a time in a more personalized atmosphere, and teachers provide the curricular supports. As well, teachers provide a much-needed life skills course from which these at-risk students benefit. The alternate programs retain many of those students who might not otherwise be successful in a more traditional learning atmosphere.

As well, the co-operative education program, or co-op, is thriving in Ottawa-Carleton. Co-op provides a link between learning in the classroom and learning in the worksite, as students can gain academic credits through a work placement. This program appeals to a wide variety of students and offers opportunities in a variety of fields. For example, we have students who enjoy placements in schools, hospitals, automotive centres, offices, stores, banks and research institutions, just to name a few. Co-op gives students a taste of what they are working towards and provides motivation for them to buckle down and get their credits.

I will briefly refer to OYAP, the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, a program with which you may already be familiar, which has established a formal link with licensed trades. This is again a valuable initiative for students, monitored by qualified teachers, who are best able to provide the supports needed by our students.

As you can see, we don't need this bill. If you are looking to allow more students access to the types of opportunities I have mentioned, then I ask you to provide the support and funding required to do just that. If you are looking to allow more students access to these types of opportunities, I would encourage you to share best practices throughout the province. If you are looking for new ideas to allow equivalent learning opportunities, then please allow the boards the flexibility to use their creativity and emphasize programs that are important to the needs of their students, and support and fund these pilot projects.

Whether you believe that we need to increase and/or provide new equivalent learning opportunities, please remember that schools, teachers and board-employed professional support staff contained within them have the best chance of providing these programs successfully. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your time today. We should have time for one question, and in the rotation it's Mr. Marchese's turn.

Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Thank you for your presentation, Kerry. I've been arguing all along that the government has the means to expand the current delivery of alternate programs, and you just made a long list of them. What prevents the government from continuing to expand those good examples you mentioned, or possibly others? What purpose would there be; and do you know any teacher in the system who supports this bill, by the way?

Ms. Houlahan: No.

Mr. Marchese: And with respect to why the government would be doing this—

Ms. Houlahan: I'm not sure why they would be doing this. I believe that we are already able to provide, as I've indicated, the equivalent learning opportunities. We need the funding to keep those programs in place and to pilot new initiatives, as well.

Mr. Marchese: Mr. Chair, sorry. Are you rotating?

The Chair: You have the rotation this time, and you have about a minute-and-a-half for questions.

Mr. Marchese: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: You're using your time very economically this time.

Mr. Marchese: Of course. One of the things that concerns me is the fact that they would punish parents. For example, if they knowingly hold back a student—at least, while he's working as opposed to being in school—a parent could be fined; the student could be fined; the employer could be fined. And it used to be \$200 under the Tories. Under the Liberals, it's going up to a thousand bucks.

Students also can't get their licence unless they get their graduation. What do you think about those other

punitive elements of this bill to get students to stay in school?

0920

Ms. Houlahan: As an educator, I don't believe that punitive measures achieve results that meet student needs. I believe that motivation from a positive angle produces better results and that punitive consequences will not bring about the changes or the learning that we are trying to achieve for our students, especially those students most at risk.

Mr. Marchese: And that's the point, Kerry: Motivation produces the best result, and providing the better programs does that. This is why it puzzles me. I expected some bill like this to be introduced by the Tories, so when it's introduced by Liberals, it worries me, because then I wonder what they're thinking and what they're doing. If students have problems and they're not dealt with by age 16, whether they're psychological, sociological, economic or educational, how can we seriously help those students after age 16?

Ms. Houlahan: We certainly can't help them by providing learning opportunities without certified, qualified teachers and the supports that teachers have access to for their students within schools. It would be ridiculous to think that that would happen on a work site with a small business owner, for example.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your time today and for taking the time to come in and see us.

Mr. David Smith—is David Smith in the room? Okay. Alyson Aylsworth?

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION
DISTRICT 25, ONTARIO TEACHERS'
BARGAINING UNIT

The Chair: The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, district 25, Susan Rab? Welcome this morning, and good morning.

Ms. Susan Rab: I guess no more scribbling allowed in terms of getting ready.

The Chair: Oh, it's very informal. You'll thoroughly enjoy it. I guess if you've been in the room, you've picked up the general ground rules. You have 10 minutes for your presentation. If you leave any time remaining, we'll divide it among the parties for questions, if there's enough time for a round. Please begin by identifying yourself for Hansard and then proceed.

Ms. Rab: I'm Susan Rab, and I am the past teachers' president, currently working as an occasional teacher for this semester in the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. We've provided a written submission provincially and I'll be expanding upon that.

On behalf of the members of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation in Ottawa-Carleton, I thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning. The 4,000 members of district 25 include teachers, occasional teachers and all unionized support staff who work for the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, including

custodians, educational assistants, psychologists, social workers and the like.

Our membership has grave concerns about the impact of Bill 52, Learning to Age 18. If passed, it will negatively affect student learning and has the potential to undermine public education in the province of Ontario. Surely that is not your intention.

As my colleague Kerry Houlahan has previously described, our schools already provide innovative programs to address the needs of students, particularly those at risk of not graduating.

I want to be clear: My education degree was earned at an outdoor and experiential-led program. I fully support non-traditional learning settings. While many of us think of school as four walls of a classroom with desks in a row, that's not where kids learn best and, for many of our at-risk students, that setting makes it difficult to learn at all.

But quality education does take place in a setting where a trained teacher is supported by the larger school community, delivering a curriculum which meets agreed-upon standards. We need more innovative programs within the structure of publicly funded schools.

We currently live in a society which expects certain emotional and safety standards for its students. For the last decade, the government of Ontario has been determined to monitor the quality of teachers in Ontario. For better or worse, the College of Teachers became the licensing agency for teachers in Ontario. It ensures that teachers have received adequate pre-service training from an accredited faculty of education.

Boards are required to report when people leave their employment under questionable circumstances. New boards must contact the previous employer before hiring an experienced teacher. In cases where professional standards are not met, the college revokes licences of teachers and they can no longer teach in the province. The public expects this now. We are entrusted with educating young people. Bill 52 does not appear to establish a parallel—and expensive—licensing system for instructors in each equivalent learning setting. In the litigious society that we live in, with high demands of public institutions, it's patently unreasonable to train, license, monitor and track teachers who provide the majority of credits within a school system and then say, "Oops. Too bad. It just so happens that Johnny got himself into a very unfortunate situation with an uncertified instructor, with a negligible support system, and no monitoring system."

On a day-to-day basis, teachers monitor attendance of students. Mechanisms are in place to track attendance, follow up with parents and, when necessary, refer to guidance counsellors, social workers, vice-principals or attendance counsellors. We can't expect the local landscaping company to establish a similar set of procedures. We can't expect the local landscaper to be following up and wondering about further risks of non-graduation or, worse, whether abuse is happening at home or whether there are other incidents that need to be intervened upon. They're in the business of landscaping, and that's fair.

Professional development is provided in our schools by a trained school principal. In the staff room, there is sharing and support of colleagues. Further training is provided, procedures are put in place, they're implemented and reviewed. Colleagues have time to discuss among themselves and to establish norms. A faith-based institution doesn't have the capacity to do likewise.

When a coroner's inquest determines that a particular death was avoidable, laws are passed and procedures are implemented to ensure that every single teacher in the province is trained in addressing anaphylactic shock. A volunteer community organization cannot respond in a similar fashion.

In our schools, we have an induction program that's been established to bring new teachers into the profession. There's an orientation program, professional development is organized, and individual mentors provide guidance regarding fire drills, boundary issues and the like. A students' federation does not have the same resources to implement.

All of the above-named groups in Ontario society can and should contribute to the education of Ontario's young people, but they're not in the primary business of education. They have their own interests, their own needs and their own priorities for their limited resources. Asking them to become de facto schools in the year 2006 would not be efficient, cost effective or safe, nor would it improve the quality of education in our province. Teachers and support staff in publicly funded schools have the skills, knowledge and support systems to teach students in a safe and caring manner. We need to expand the learning opportunities for our neediest students. Let's do it where the best chances of success exist: the publicly funded education system.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We should have time for one question, and in the rotation, it's the government side.

Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot): Thanks very much, Susan, for your presentation. By the way, I had the opportunity, along with Mr. Marchese, to address your annual meeting. I want to say to you for the record that your "Putting students first" approach is almost precisely where this government is heading, so thank you for that. You've taken some leadership in other areas, which we've mirrored—in fact, copied—so we appreciate that.

You mentioned that you experienced part of your education in a non-traditional setting. I did as well. When I was at grad school, I arranged a field placement here at Queen's Park, with the NDP caucus as a matter of fact, only to be told by the graduate school I was at, "You couldn't do that. You'd never be successful in politics unless you were supervised by somebody who's got an MSW." Anyhow, as fate would have it, that was a great learning experience for me. Within the school guidelines, the stakeholder who assisted was able to cope. So there can be ways we can do that.

0930

I guess my question to you is, if we could find ways to build in the links—and you probably know that the

minister and the PAs to the minister have been meeting with the various associations around the whole issue of linkage. If we could find ways to build in the linkages so that we can take advantage of our community partners who want to stand shoulder to shoulder with our kids and help to ensure that they're successful, if we can find ways to build those links in a way that makes sense to us all, is this equivalent learning and dual-credit thing something that you'd be prepared personally, given your experience, to embrace?

Ms. Rab: Yes, and I think that we're currently doing it. When the bill was first introduced, you heard from OSSTF that as long as secondary credits were affiliated directly with a school board under the supervision of a certified teacher, then we're in favour of partnerships.

I spent six years taking kids to Korea. They got credits in Korean language and we certainly worked—I didn't have a huge experience personally in a lot of the subject matter, so I was forced to work with community members and to deal with partners in a way to provide education to our students. But the key there was that the direct responsibility in terms of safety, in terms of the value of a credit, was done by a teacher under the direct supervision of a principal.

Mr. McMeekin: The kinds of provisions we do for co-op?

Ms. Rab: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you very much for having come in this morning.

DAVID SMITH

The Chair: Let's see if some of our presenters are in the room now. David Smith? Please come and sit down. Good morning. I'm glad you could join us. You'll have 10 minutes to make your deputation. If you don't use all of it, then some time will be allocated to the parties in a rotation sequence to ask you questions. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard, and the floor is yours.

Mr. David Smith: Thank you very much. My name is David Smith. I'm a grade 12 student at Ancaster High School in Hamilton, Ontario.

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. As a concerned student and a voter, I am here today to submit my opinion and that of many of my peers to the committee regarding the ratification of legislative Bill 52, the Education Statute Law Amendment Act.

I am here today because this act directly affects me, my peers and many high school students to come. I felt it was my responsibility as a student and a citizen of Ontario to express my views on the various issues addressed by the bill.

I've been in the Ontario secondary school system for five years now. I have yet to graduate, as I took a one-year exchange program to Japan in 2004-05. On my return, I returned to the school system and hope to graduate in June of next year. I feel that my experience in the Ontario system, as well as that in the Japanese education system, has given me a broader understanding

of how students learn and how the education system works.

Bill 52 is aimed at making many changes to the Education Act and to the Highway Traffic Act of Ontario. This morning I would like to discuss some of the major issues the bill addresses.

The first issue I would like to tackle is the so-called equivalent credits. These are credits proposed by the assembly to grant to students for completing, as has been suggested, between 45 and 65 hours of unpaid work or equivalent study. It is my understanding that this can give the students two credits toward their Ontario secondary school diploma, one of which is a university or college credit which can be used in university applications.

The truth is, these credits are nowhere near equivalent to that of a traditional high school credit because in quantity and quality, time spent and the actual effectiveness of the learning or training provided is nowhere near that of a high school level. It is truly inequitable for a student to be able to go to Wal-Mart and stock shelves for 45 hours and get two credits for that, while a student in the traditional system has to work 110 hours in a classroom setting in order to get one credit. Furthermore, the actual amount of work done in these placements is yet unspecified and would likely be far less rigorous than that of a traditional classroom setting. Basically, my doing a grade 12 university credit is being compared to someone working at some sort of business to get a credit.

In regard to the credit courses offered by post-secondary institutions such as colleges and universities, these programs are not regulated to meet the same standards as the Ontario high school curriculum. Although many respected institutions are able to provide these courses, they would probably ask for tuition from students. As well, in the Student Success Commission it has been said they would receive funding for each student. That seems a little bit like double-dipping, does it not? The problem with giving the money to these institutions for taking the students is that it would dig into funding for music, sports, fine arts and drama. Keeping 85% of students in school until they graduate is not really worth it when you're taking out of the school system what that 85% stays for.

The next issue is that students doing work for credit at a third-party employer take jobs away from students who need them. Some students are at school part-time for the purpose of working half their day and going to school half their day to fund their post-secondary education. I personally know a few students at my school who are doing this, and charging their employer for employing them during school hours is completely unfair.

Furthermore, taking licences away for truancy issues is completely illogical because, for some students, it's their only way around. You're from my area, Mr. McMeekin. You know lots of Ancaster students are from rural areas—Mount Hope, Caledonia—and a car is their only way to get to school, work and family obligations.

Mr. McMeekin: David, I hear you.

Mr. Marchese: But does the minister hear too?

Mr. McMeekin: Yes, the minister hears too.

The Chair: Order.

Mr. Smith: It's their only way to get to these obligations, and punishing the students by taking their licences away is not what you want to do. This aspect of the bill would punish students rather than reward them. Is this really the kind of mentality that the Ministry of Education wants to give to students?

The next thing is, as I mentioned, I was an exchange student for a year. I am now 18, coming back into the education system, and there is wording that permits the suggestion that funding might be capped for students above the age of 18. I would not have been able to complete my exchange and have the opportunity to learn a second language, to become fluent in it and fall in love with the country. I fear that this opportunity would be taken away from younger students.

Many of my peers have planned their courses to finish them in four years but have changed their minds. To come back without funding would really curtail their opportunities to experience what they would like to.

Over my experience in high school, I have experienced many things, some good and some bad. For the most part, changes in our government have not truly affected me, but this bill does. It affects me and it affects my peers. It's our education. And I'm sorry to say it's not the assembly's education; you've done your schooling. It's not our parents' or our teachers'—it's ours.

I sincerely hope that in future you would make students aware of the schools you're affecting, what you're doing, because I only found out about this bill two weeks ago. That's deplorable. It's been going on for approximately a year now, and I only found out about two weeks ago. So I sincerely hope that in future students can be made aware and be invited to take part in the decision-making process.

In conclusion, I believe that, first of all, we have a right to know about changes to our education. It should be made clear to the students of Ontario. The equivalent credit system proposed by the bill not only takes essential funding out of schools but it allows students to get credits they really don't deserve. There are plenty of programs already in place in school systems in non-traditional learning, and they work. So why mess with them?

The Chair: David, you have a little more than a minute and a half left.

Mr. Smith: Yes, sir. If this bill is put into law, it would create so many problems in schools and in the community, putting non-post-secondary-bound students into dead-end jobs, where they will probably stay long after they get their credit because they don't have the education to get into better jobs. If students are put into those situations, seven times out of 10 their children will be put in the same situation and the intellectual degeneration of Canadian society will get exponentially worse.

0940

Ladies and gentleman of the standing committee, Bill 52 creates many problems that affect our education. These problems must be addressed.

The Chair: We should have time for one brief question. It's Mr. Klees's turn in the rotation.

Mr. Klees: David, thank you very much for your presentation. You're affirming, from a student's perspective, what we've been saying to the government from the day that we first saw this bill: that it's terribly flawed and it really should be withdrawn in totality.

I would have this question for you because, under the guise of this bill, the government is suggesting that this is all about keeping students in school until they're age 18.

Mr. Smith: Yes, sir.

Mr. Klees: What do you feel should be done to encourage students to graduate rather than drop out?

Mr. Smith: I think we should tailor the current curriculum towards the students who choose not to do a more traditional thing. As has been said by the previous presenter, there are no actual teaching accreditations to these facilitators of these extracurricular credits. In Ancaster High School, there are classrooms that are unused. I know that students would like to take tech design or electronics, but there are no teachers there to teach them. So tailoring the curriculum more towards those students and not so "all university-bound; everyone's going to university" sort of thing would allow students to get better prepared to enter the workforce.

The Chair: Thanks, David, for coming in.

ALISON AYLSWORTH

The Chair: Our next deputant is Alyson Aylsworth. Is Alyson Aylsworth present? Good morning. If you've been here a little while, you know the general procedure. You'll have 10 minutes to make your deputation this morning. If you leave any time remaining, the next party in the rotation may have a chance to ask you a question. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard, and proceed.

Ms. Alyson Aylsworth: My name is Alyson Aylsworth. Members of the committee, good morning. I'm speaking to you today wearing several hats. I'm a parent of a seven-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl. I've been a high school teacher for 23 years and a department head—that is to say, middle management—for 20 of those years. I'm a musician and I really love my job. I'm happily married, 18 years, to another musician who's a small business owner. I work at a terrific school, in a building that is falling down. Mine is a school that has high standards in the classroom and a huge commitment to its students extracurricularly. I and my colleagues truly believe in a nuanced and experiential education for all.

I fervently believe in public education. I always tell my students that they must live in their world and they must not accept sound bites in place of news analyses. As a community leader, I put my money where my mouth is. I try to read the front section of both the *Globe* and the *Star* every day. And so I found, multi-tasking at a staff meeting, an elegant argument for public education that I've asked the clerk to distribute among you. If any of you were at last Thursday's dinner and heard Senator

Hugh Segal in person—perhaps you'll bear with me. It's on a caution-yellow sheet; I'm reading the middle of it. The whole speech was just terrific.

"Without a dynamic and compelling public education system, we surrender one of the only ... instruments for the management of diversity, the development of common cause and common equality of opportunity within our pluralist society. Without kids learning about each other in a common setting instructed by caring, properly recognized and fairly paid teachers who reflect the best and brightest of our society, we would simply and directly be surrendering the imperatives of social cohesion and civility to the forces of fragmentation."

The Chair: Could you just lean back just a bit further from the microphone?

Ms. Aylsworth: I'm sorry. Am I driving you nuts? Okay.

The Chair: Yeah, just push it up a bit. Thanks.

Ms. Aylsworth: I have very bad eyes. If I get that I can't read this, I'll yank my contacts out and we'll go with glasses.

The Chair: It's a problem you share with the Chair, so don't worry.

Ms. Aylsworth: Yes, it's an aging thing. When you get to be 46, it's—I'm back on my little read here.

"These forces may be benign, humane and well-intentioned. But they are the forces of fragmentation."

He goes on, "Public education is about our own common resolve about the future we share. And I happen to believe that when the dynamism, quality, commitment to excellence and central social standing of our public education system are in peril, so is our future together." That's from Hugh Segal.

My chief concern with Bill 52 is the idea of course equivalency. What is very unclear is the direction which the ministry is intending for public education, and what is very scary is the direction which could be taken, given the lack of accountability in the language of the bill as it stands. I guess what it is that I don't understand is the need for it. The ideas in the bill are not new. Really, they are not.

Much is being done in alternative education to reach the disenfranchised group that one would think would be the target for this bill. The student success initiative has this year piloted Turning Point. We have the GET program in our school, and it's working well. We have SALEP, supervised alternative learning for excused pupils. The Ontario youth apprenticeship program is another exciting initiative. These are specifically designed concepts, taught by experienced, qualified professionals. These models are under the supervision of principals and boards of education who are, in turn, responsible to the ministry for exacting standards and ethical practices.

I know that students should stay in school in courses that seem relevant to them. I know that it is the intention of this bill to address that issue. There are truths, however, that are not being regarded. One is that some students come to their schools distressed by their own

issues or family issues. The truth is that our supports are in place for these students, but these supports have been subject to so many cuts that they are seriously eroded. Not all who have needs can be served in a timely manner, and this deficit affects the students who are most at risk, those who need one-to-one contact with teachers who are trained and experienced to meet their specific needs. Funding must be restored to strengthen these programs already in place, not handed out to new sources.

It is certainly a truth that high school students will take the easy route, if there is one, and live to regret these choices at their leisure. Watering down credits so that the bar is so low that anyone can step over it will seem terrific to them at first because they lack the foresight, especially if there is nothing to distinguish between a rigorous Ministry of Ed course from one that is quite different in its substance.

But it is also a truth that when I walked across the road to where students were smoking the other day and talked to those whom you may imagine were quite likely to be there—students who, for the most part, knew me by reputation only—the seniors were united in that they did not want Ontario society to be undereducated and narrow in focus and frame of reference, limited and limiting. We were all on the same page. We cannot chip away at Ontario education so that it becomes a farming system for industry. Rather, Ontario should be a leader in turning out dynamic graduates with well-rounded and diverse educational backgrounds, grads who will be able to take their place in a continually evolving workplace, as is the reality of the world of work today.

There is another truth, and that truth is that teachers are good at teaching. They care about education and educating students. They are solely focused on the idea of raising comprehensive young Canadians. Education in the private sector is at least two-pronged. As teachers, we recognize that every student has different needs and some of our students require the services of the alternative education programs already in place. Their involvement in these alternative programs provides for many students the opportunity for success. That success is based on real achievement, as specified by rigorous standards.

Bill 52 is void of language to protect and guarantee standards of excellence. Our students' self-esteem is nurtured by success, but that personal growth would be compromised without carefully monitored and tailored standards. What sense of achievement could the student have regarding the completion of a credit that offers no challenge?

I have been, with my ensembles, in public schools in the States where public education is devalued by high achievers and certainly not considered by any with the means to send their children elsewhere, where there are few electives and no joy.

I believe that this bill, while well intentioned, puts not only our at-risk students in harm's way but it compromises the integrity of our entire system and leaves us subject to the kind of criticism that forces parents like me to consider the private school.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Chair: Thank you very much for having come in. I think we would have time, Mr. Marchese, for one economical question.

Mr. Marchese: Thank you, Alyson. It's amazing to me that this government has broken so many promises yet it's keeping one of the most inexplicable of bills: Bill 52. This is the one they should drop, yet they're keeping it. I can't understand it for the life of me. Most educators are against it. Seemingly, there are a number of intelligent people in that caucus, yet the minister has been a—

Ms. Aylsworth: There are a lot of intelligent Liberals.

Mr. Marchese: This minister has been a supporter of this bill, and I just don't get it. Do you get it?

Ms. Aylsworth: Yes. I think the intention was to really help at-risk students, but I've been reading lately about the BC model and that scares me, because I think my job is going to be farmed out. And that's fine. I've got seven years left; I won't be farmed out.

Mr. Marchese: But as you said, the way to help kids is through the current programs that you mentioned.

Ms. Aylsworth: I would hope so, yes.

Mr. Marchese: So why not expand that?

Ms. Aylsworth: Well, because the Harris government pulled funding from those programs and they no longer—

Mr. Marchese: So why not improve those?

Ms. Aylsworth: I think we need to improve the funding. I think those programs are terrific, and they have been honed and honed. Even as we speak, they are being honed by teachers in the system, as we all hone our arguments every day.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Alyson.

Interjection.

Ms. Aylsworth: Absolutely.

The Chair: Mr. McMeekin, can you please address the remark through the Chair.

Thank you very much, Alyson, for coming in this morning and for your very interesting deputation.

Our next deputation is the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, Simcoe county. Mr. Joe Lamoureux, are you present in the room? No. Okay.

FÉDÉRATION DES ENSEIGNANTES ET
ENSEIGNANTS DES ÉCOLES
SECONDAIRES DE L'ONTARIO—UNITÉ 57,
DISTRICT 31

The Chair: I have a request from the clerk to, in view of time constraints, ask for la Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants des écoles secondaires de l'Ontario—unité 57, district 31. Lynn Filion?

Mr. Marchese: Sorry, Chair. This society is not here either?

The Chair: They are, and through the clerk, we have the flexibility in our time to remain on schedule and to deal with la fédération tout de suite.

Mr. Marchese: You're switching them?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Marchese: Why don't you just say that? Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Marchese, we're doing our best to enable them to meet a pretty inflexible flight schedule.

M^{me} Lynn Filion: J'ai un vol à 12 h 10, alors je vous remercie.

Chers membres du comité, bonjour. Je m'appelle Lynn Filion. Je représente le personnel de soutien en éducation ainsi que le personnel professionnel des services aux élèves du Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario.

Juste pour vous donner un aperçu de notre géographie, le conseil a un total de 19 écoles, dont 11 écoles élémentaires et huit écoles secondaires. Nous avons environ 1750 élèves au palier secondaire, un territoire de 550 mille kilomètres carrés qui s'étend de Noëlville jusqu'à Longlac, comptant une distance d'au moins 12 heures de route.

Ceci dit, le projet de loi 52 sur l'apprentissage jusqu'à l'âge de 18 ans, tel que proposé par le gouvernement McGuinty, repose sur deux points :

(1) exiger que les élèves fréquentent l'école jusqu'à l'âge de 18 ans, que ce soit dans une salle de classe ou par le biais de possibilités d'apprentissage équivalent;

(2) fixer des mesures d'exécution pour s'assurer que les élèves fréquentent l'école jusqu'à l'âge de 18 ans telles que refuser le permis de conduire ontarien à ceux qui décrochent.

Mes membres ont plusieurs questions et inquiétudes en ce qui a trait aux conséquences de l'apprentissage équivalent et des crédits externes. Par exemple: où seront dispensés ces cours d'apprentissage équivalent?

La réalité francophone est très différente de celle des anglophones. Les conseils scolaires francophones ont des étendues géographiques larges où l'on retrouve de nombreuses petites écoles dans des petites communautés. Nous n'avons simplement pas accès aux mêmes services communautaires en français.

Les opportunités collégiales sont aussi restreintes. Par exemple, à Sudbury nous offrons un cours en techniques d'évaluation d'automobile en partenariat avec le Collège Boréal. À Longlac et à Elliot Lake, ces cours ne sont pas disponibles aux élèves. Il n'y a pas de campus dans la communauté; non seulement qu'il n'y a pas de campus collégial, mais il y a très peu d'organismes francophones. Il y a tellement peu d'organismes francophones qu'un des crédits de source externe que le ministère de l'Éducation considère dans son plan aurait été offert par la FESFO. Comment ironique : des élèves qui forment des élèves. Plusieurs de ces petites communautés ne font même pas partie d'une municipalité organisée.

Ce projet de loi n'est pas équitable pour tous, plus particulièrement pour les francophones, parce que nous serons à la merci des organismes anglophones pour fournir des crédits d'apprentissage équivalent. Nous croyons que le plan d'apprentissage équivalent nuirait à nos élèves en favorisant l'assimilation. Nous avons besoin d'améliorer les programmes scolaires existants et de continuer à offrir des services de soutien professionnel

à ces élèves afin qu'ils reçoivent les divers types d'aide à l'apprentissage dont ils ont besoin.

Une autre de nos inquiétudes : qui approuvera les fournisseurs de ces cours? Le personnel associé à ces cours d'apprentissage équivalent sera-t-il soumis à une vérification du casier judiciaire?

Les parents savent que les écoles secondaires gérées par les conseils scolaires ontariens offrent des environnements d'apprentissage sains et sécuritaires et du personnel professionnel spécialisé. Les parents savent que tout le personnel du conseil scolaire a subi une vérification de leur casier judiciaire et qu'il est évalué régulièrement. Le personnel des écoles pense avant tout à la santé et à la sécurité de tous les élèves. La bonne communication avec les parents est pratiquée et attendue. Présentement, les secrétaires d'école s'assurent d'aviser les parents lors d'une absence. Est-ce que les établissements qui offrent des cours externes aviseront les parents? Feront-ils un suivi si l'élève est absent? Les mesures de protection nécessaires seront-elles en place pour assurer la sécurité des élèves?

Un autre point : comment le ministère s'assurera-t-il que les crédits externes et doubles suivis par les élèves ne diminueront pas les fonds alloués aux conseils scolaires?

Le gouvernement a proposé que la mise en oeuvre du projet de loi 52 entraînera une nette augmentation des inscriptions dans les écoles secondaires. Il assume que les élèves qui n'ont pas réussi au niveau secondaire peuvent revenir avec l'aide des crédits doubles et externes. En ayant la possibilité d'acquérir jusqu'à huit crédits de sources externes, et sans limite sur la manière dont les élèves peuvent utiliser ces crédits pour obtenir leur diplôme, il y aura une perte inévitable d'inscriptions au niveau secondaire surtout dans les écoles francophones.

La composante principale des règlements prévus liés au projet de loi 52 est une structure financière incitative. Ce financement rattaché au crédit au niveau secondaire sera le commencement d'une éducation à charte en Ontario. Les collèges et les universités, de même que les organismes religieux et privés, auront libre accès aux fonds destinés à l'éducation publique grâce à ces bons d'études. Ces établissements ont fait beaucoup de lobbying afin d'accéder à ces fonds. Il n'y a aucune attente que les fonds qui sortiront des écoles élémentaires et secondaires seront remplacés par un autre financement de base. La perte de fonds pour le système public qui en résultera aura un effet dévastateur surtout pour les conseils francophones qui ont déjà du mal à offrir une gamme complète de services.

Cette année, notre conseil a été obligé d'épuiser des fonds de ses réserves afin de pouvoir offrir des services adéquats. Nous avons perdu des postes de secrétaires d'écoles secondaires ainsi que des commis de bibliothèque. Si plusieurs élèves suivent des cours d'apprentissage équivalent externes, et si le financement est réduit, les conseils scolaires seront-ils forcés de fermer les écoles qui seront maintenant sous-utilisées?

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Notre dernière inquiétude repose sur le fait que le ministère veut refuser le permis de conduire ontarien aux

élèves jusqu'à l'âge de 18 ans qui décrochent. Les éducateurs encouragent les élèves à fréquenter l'école en leur offrant un environnement d'apprentissage attrayant et intéressant qui répond à leurs besoins. Les élèves du palier secondaire qui rencontrent des difficultés à l'école ne seront pas plus intéressés à apprendre en se voyant refuser le permis de conduire. Les élèves du nord de l'Ontario qui habitent dans des régions rurales n'auront pas nécessairement des services de transport municipal, tels que l'autobus et le métro, comme ceux qui habitent dans les grandes villes. Ils subiront des conséquences beaucoup plus sévères que ceux qui auront accès à ces services de transport. Ce n'est ni juste ni équitable pour ces élèves.

La FEESO est d'avis que le projet de loi 52 est inutile et doit être retiré.

Des occasions pertinentes d'apprentissage équivalent sont présentement disponibles et sont offertes dans plusieurs conseils scolaires par les écoles secondaires de l'Ontario, de la neuvième à la 12^e année : Préparation au diplôme d'études secondaires de l'Ontario. Toutefois, des fonds additionnels sont nécessaires pour améliorer les installations et offrir davantage de choix de cours aux élèves, les cours que nous avons déjà en place.

Les ramifications du projet de loi 52 entraîneront une dépréciation importante du diplôme d'études secondaires et du milieu des écoles secondaires en Ontario. Aucune modification ne pourrait empêcher de manière adéquate le mal causé par l'introduction généralisée de cours externes et de cours doubles par des fournisseurs illimités et non spécifiés d'apprentissage équivalent.

Le Président: Merci beaucoup. Il reste le temps pour une petite question du gouvernement.

M. Khalil Ramal (London-Fanshawe): Je n'ai pas de question. Merci beaucoup pour votre présentation. Je pense que notre gouvernement travaille, comme la communauté francophone de l'Ontario, pour établir un mécanisme spécial pour « implanter » cette loi.

Le Président: Merci beaucoup pour votre présence et votre députation ce matin.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 17
SIMCOE COUNTY

The Chair: Our next deputation is from Mr. Lamoureux from OSSTF, Simcoe county. Is Mr. Lamoureux in the room? Come on forward and sit down. If you've been in the room a little while, you get the general gist of the ground rules.

Mr. George Lamoureux: No, I'm sorry. We had to wait for the Speaker to come through and I was unable to—

The Chair: Okay. You have 10 minutes for your deputation this morning. If you leave any time, it will be given to the next party in the rotation. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then continue.

Mr. Lamoureux: My name is George Lamoureux and I am with the Ontario Secondary School Teachers'

Federation. If the committee wouldn't mind, I'll read my statement and then entertain questions.

I'd like to thank the members of this committee for allowing me to speak as president of district 17 (Simcoe) OSSTF, on behalf of the over 1,500 teachers and occasional teachers employed by the Simcoe County District School Board.

I wish to expand upon the written submission made by the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation to accent the local realities that would be negatively changed if this piece of legislation were to proceed in its present form. My members are extremely concerned and disturbed by the apparent lack of respect for their professionalism and degradation of the credit integrity that is contained in the provisions of this legislation, specifically in reference to subsection 8(1), which proposes to allow approved providers to issue credits.

My members already dutifully provide this service to all of the students in Simcoe county. We work extremely hard to ensure that the most vulnerable students receive the best education possible so that our young people are successful. My members work tirelessly to ensure that all the needs are met for the students by offering unique and extensive programs for pupils. A lack of funding has been our biggest challenge as we seek to squeeze every dime possible out of a funding formula that does not adequately meet the needs of our students.

With the proposed legislation, we would lose precious dollars to outside agencies that offer a program that is less comprehensive and lacks the integrity of the current credit system. Coupled with this is the proposed ability of those outside of the profession to offer credit.

In Simcoe county, we have a program to deliver experiential learning. It's called the co-operative education program, which offers diverse and meaningful programs for all the students, with special emphasis on those who have been considered at risk. For example, at Bear Creek Secondary School in Barrie, we offer a heavy machinery co-op program that is the envy of the province. Another example: Bradford District High School in Bradford offers, in conjunction with local trade unions, a unique program that allows students to experience the construction industry in all its facets. As well, all our 16 secondary schools offer Over the Top Co-op education programs that support students who are currently looking to complete their Ontario secondary school diploma but short only a few credits and currently in the workforce. Those programs highlight the potential within the publicly funded secondary school system that is currently free from siphoning by outside agencies and provided by teachers who are accountable to the public.

I taught in New Zealand for a year and a half in the mid-1990s and saw first-hand the devastating effects of allowing funds from the public school system to be offered to private or post-secondary credit-granting agencies. This concept of allowing students to move their funding from public to private agencies is called vouchering. This system saw students leave the current school, as programming was unavailable to be offered locally

due to a lack of funding, and the resulting transient nature of the students which the voucher system promotes. Students became consumers who shopped around for the types of courses that could be offered. The only way for publicly funded schools to compete was to offer unique programs which, sadly, left those students who could not afford transportation to various sites or who had suffered academically with little or no options. Vouchering resulted in the loss of those teachers and support staff who were newest to the profession.

All the good that this government has done in education could quickly be reversed as the newer teachers are removed from the system as cuts result from the loss of student population. My members are offended by the pieces in this legislation that support the notion that non-members of the college of teachers are as qualified to teach as they are.

As a current PhD in education student, I am appalled to see in the legislation the concept that educational training and professionalism of teachers is disrespected and ignored. It's abhorrent that any government would consider proposing legislation in the education field that would not include a full and clear expectation that the only persons who should deliver credit are those who are qualified and safe to be placed in a position of trust as teachers.

In my board, we currently offer alternative education programs that encompass high-needs, at-risk students along with young mothers' programs that allow students opportunities for success that otherwise would be unavailable to them. Those programs have had to defend themselves through funding cuts and various challenges, as they are more expensive for the board to run and would surely be dropped if our board were to suffer from an exodus of students as a result of this bill.

Our local post-secondary education institution, Georgian College, has already distributed flyers throughout our system and in our coterminous board that contain the promise that a dual credit can be obtained in 42 hours. This issue makes it evident that the proposed credits from our local colleges will be significantly attractive to students and with much less integrity than the 110-hour secondary school credits.

My members deliver credible and unique programs for all our young people to be successful. This government does not need to invoke Bill 52 to satisfy their desire to help at-risk students. They just need to simply go into the local schools to see the success of programs we have been able to institute already.

Degrading the current credit system and allowing unqualified people and, in turn, unregulated individuals to deliver credit at this time is not an answer. We need to properly fund and support our qualified, regulated professionals to do their job of providing quality, publicly funded education through trained professionals, be they teachers, support staff, administrators and beyond. Within this context, a publicly funded school system will be very successful.

The Chair: Thank you for your deputation. We should have time for a brief question.

Mr. Klees: Thank you very much for your submission. Would you conclude, based on your assessment of the impact of the proposed alternative learning options in Bill 52, that if Bill 52 is passed in its current form, it would in fact result in a watering down of standards within our education system?

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Mr. Lamoureux: My short answer is yes, because I have seen the flyer that was put out by Georgian College, our coterminous post-secondary education institution, in my local jurisdiction, and there's no way that you can compare a 42-hour credit to a 110-hour credit. It's apples and oranges.

Mr. Klees: So while the government may well be able to pat itself on the back at the end of the day for keeping more students in school longer, the conclusion really would be that in order to achieve that, they watered down the standards in our system, and those students who are graduating may have a piece of paper, but it really won't unlock the doors they need to unlock to get on with their lives. Would you agree with that?

Mr. Lamoureux: I would, in the context that we did have a joint program with Georgian College earlier this year, a pilot program that was offered in conjunction with the school program that is already in place. It was very successful, and it would lead to more integrity of the credit that you speak of.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Lamoureux, for coming in this morning.

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

The Chair: Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies—Dennis Nolan and Jeanette Lewis. Good morning, and welcome.

Mr. Dennis Nolan: Good morning.

The Chair: I believe the committee has a copy of your bound brief. Thank you very much for coming in. You'll have 10 minutes for your deputation this morning. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard. If there's any time remaining, it will move to the next party in the rotation for questions. Proceed at your leisure.

Mr. Nolan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My name is Dennis Nolan and my partner here is Jeanette Lewis. Jeanette is the executive director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. We have supporting us in the room Amanda Rose, one of our youth who's been living through the experiences that we're here to share with you briefly.

We'd like to, just for a moment, say something about us. We are the association that gathers together 52 of the CASs in Ontario and we do work, perform service and undertake advocacy on their behalf. We are here because we think that Bill 52 has numerous very substantial and good features. So we are pleased about the bill. We noticed when it was first introduced that it was 50 years since Ontario updated the high school leaving age requirement. They did it just around the time I was in high

school, I guess, so it's a long time ago. The government acknowledged that it was time, in the 21st century, that organizations and institutions provide the kinds of programs that are relevant today. We applaud this direction and ask that the principle also be applied to child protection age requirements, which have not been reviewed in over 100 years. OACAS supports the bill because we strongly endorse any efforts designed to ensure that youth receive the educational support they need to become productive and informed adult citizens.

Ontario children's aid societies are the parents of 18,000 young people. These young people are in our care because of significant hardships: abuse, neglect, abandonment and other disruptions. They face, therefore, extraordinary challenges in proceeding through school.

This year, we conducted a survey among 300 of our youth, and they cited four major issues that we want to bring to your attention: first, their need for emotional support, such as a stable foster home or a single reliable adult; second, adequate financial support for daily living; educational support such as special programs; and the need for—and this is what I'd like to emphasize the most—continuing support beyond age 16, to 18, 21 and beyond. As one of our youth said, "Who do you belong to after you've left the system?" The youth surveyed, especially those living on their own, recognized the value of the routine and the structure provided by the education system. They would like to stay in school longer, and so they're looking for help.

We have two concerns with the legislation. They're concerns that we think could be augmented—I should say it's not the concern that could be augmented, but that the bill could be augmented. First, the government at large needs to modernize legislation to reflect societal norms, and secondly, care is needed in developing the details to support the successful implementation of this legislation.

Now for some of those details, Jeanette.

Ms. Jeanette Lewis: I'll speak first to the statutory age amendment that we believe is needed. As Mr. Nolan has said, much attention needs to be given to modernizing some of the legislation—

The Chair: Please also begin by stating your name for Hansard.

Ms. Lewis: I'm sorry. I'm Jeanette Lewis, executive director.

As Mr. Nolan has stated, government needs to look at modernizing legislation in light of societal changes and also changes in the needs of youth. One of the most significant areas that we believe should be reviewed is the need for a companion amendment to the Child and Family Services Act to permit protection services to be offered to youth up to age 18. Under the Child and Family Services Act, the definition of "child" for the purposes of protection is someone under the age of 16. Youth are thereby able to withdraw from the care of a CAS, and CASs are able to permanently terminate their involvement with youth at that age. So that means that somebody could leave the care of a CAS at age 16 but

need to remain in school until age 18 without many supports. Once that decision is made by a youth, they cannot re-enter, because the age of protection is 16. It's our strong conviction that protection intervention and services must be available to youth until the age of 18 to reflect the same provision of support to all young people as is intended in the Learning to 18 legislation we're discussing today. In addition, we would also advocate that the age limits for extended care be aligned with societal norms and be extended to age 25.

I'm not going to go through all the other provisions of the position paper, but I would highlight that we also need to look at school culture and curriculum changes to address the needs of youth in the care of children's aid societies. These are vulnerable youth, and they are more likely than their peers to need additional support because they experience educational delays. Adolescence is a tumultuous time for children who've had the trauma of abuse, neglect, often several changes of home, changes of school. Our youth also often face mental health problems and need to cope with the aftermath of their experiences of abuse and neglect. So we need alternative learning programs to address their individual needs.

Dennis, I'll let you sum it up.

Mr. Nolan: When the minister introduced the legislation, he said that we need to have legislation that will result in high-quality, meaningful educational experiences which prepare each youth for a variety of post-secondary destinations. As you've heard and as you know and as you will find from reading our material, our youth struggle more than most in trying to achieve that. As one of the youth said, "Where am I going to find someone to push me to do the stuff? I might not know what to do or where to go for help. I'll be lost."

So our youth are asking for generally what this bill is providing. What we're asking for is that we have the additional commitment of the government to ensure the programs and supports that these youth will need. The commitment of the educational sector to these youth with their multiple needs offers a significant emotional support that increases the likelihood that they will successfully achieve the education milestones of which they are capable.

OACAS, therefore, generally endorses this bill and wishes the government and our young people every success.

We're open to questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We should have time for a brief question. Mr. Marchese.

1020

Mr. Marchese: Which question?

The Chair: A brief question.

Mr. Marchese: I've got to keep track of time, because it seems to change every now and then.

Mr. Nolan and Ms. Lewis, I agree with you that the Child and Family Services Act should be changed in order to be able to extend support to those young people who need it. This bill won't do it, you know that, and I'm not sure that by saying we need to do that, it necessarily

connects to this bill in the right way. I disagree with that. I agree with you that we should be dealing with the curriculum changes to deal with kids who are in your care, and this bill doesn't do it.

You've heard all the educators, individually and collectively as the association, saying, "This is not going to bring about peace and stability, certainly. It's not going to work." As a former educator, I agree with them. You heard them say that they're already providing you—the government, at least, and I'm not sure they disagree with what they're doing—with apprenticeship programs, supervised alternative learning for excused pupils and co-op programs. Surely, if they believe in them, they should be expanding those. Why aren't they doing that rather than simply saying, "We need to extend the law and provide some outside undefined agency to provide some program which may be inadequately supervised or not at all"? By whom and what cost, we don't know. Don't you have concerns about what the teachers are saying?

Mr. Nolan: I'm also a retired former educator, so—you're not retired; I am retired.

Mr. Marchese: I'm retired as a teacher. This is true.

Mr. Nolan: I retired as a director of education not that long ago—I think not that long ago.

Sure, we have some resonance with some of the things others in the province have been saying about the legislation, but we know that we need a framework piece of legislation that's going to say, "Okay. We're moving the yardsticks from here to there." Under that, as that's developed, the regulations are written and all of the other programs are developed, it will be guided by that. We think it's important to have the sorts of changes that we say. Of course we believe that the age of protection should be extended and we know this act doesn't do it. But on the other hand, when you've made the first little step towards recognizing that 18 is a better age than 16 and that the farming community is not the agenda setter anymore around harvesting and things like that, which is how we decided when we were going to have schools in session—

The Chair: Thank you very much. I'm sorry to have to cut you off.

Mr. Nolan: Darn. I was just going to make a brilliant point.

The Chair: That's why the Legislature has written submissions. Thank you very much for having come in this morning and for having delivered your deputation.

ASSOCIATION DES ENSEIGNANTES ET
DES ENSEIGNANTS
FRANCO-ONTARIENS—EST

Le Président: AEFO, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens—Est publique de l'Ontario ; M. Jean-Guy La Prairie, s'il vous plaît. Bonjour.

M. Jean-Guy La Prairie: Merci de nous accueillir pour notre requête de ce matin.

Le Président: Bienvenue. Veuillez commencer.

M. La Prairie: Mon nom est Jean-Guy La Prairie. Je suis co-président de l'AEFO—Est publique, donc de Cornwall jusqu'à Trenton, y inclus Ottawa.

L'AEFO est une association d'enseignantes et d'enseignants franco-ontariens. C'est un syndicat qui regroupe à peu près 8 000 membres, comme vous pouvez voir dans le document qui vous a été remis.

Depuis sa présentation initiale, l'AEFO a pris connaissance de certaines modalités proposées par le ministère de l'Éducation pour mettre en oeuvre les mesures du projet de loi qui touchent l'apprentissage équivalent. Ces modalités nous inquiètent au plus haut point, car nous estimons qu'elles risquent de porter atteinte à la qualité de l'enseignement dispensé au secondaire et d'être particulièrement néfastes pour les écoles secondaires de langue française. De plus, nous croyons que les initiatives proposées ne répondent pas à l'objectif initial du projet de loi, soit d'augmenter le taux de diplomation. C'est pourquoi l'AEFO juge essentiel de revenir à la charge pour inciter le gouvernement à porter certains changements aux clauses du projet de loi 52 touchant l'apprentissage équivalent.

Ici, je vais passer les deux prochaines sections que ma collègue M^{me} Ginette Lacroix-Gosselin pourra adresser cet après-midi dans sa présentation. Nous irons donc, un peu plus loin, à la page 4, où on va parler d'élargir le choix de cours.

Dans un récent discours, la ministre de l'Éducation, M^{me} Kathleen Wynne, faisait état de 53 offres de cours dans les écoles de langue française comparativement à 101 offres de cours dans les écoles de langue anglaise.

Si plusieurs élèves suivent des cours d'apprentissage équivalents à l'extérieur de leur école secondaire, l'école n'aura plus le nombre suffisant pour offrir certains cours ou programmes optionnels. On risque donc de creuser encore davantage l'écart entre les offres de cours dans les écoles de langue française et celles de langue anglaise, alors que les écoles secondaires de langue française ont déjà peine à attirer et à garder les élèves, faute de leur offrir un éventail suffisant de cours.

Des documents du groupe de travail permanent sur l'éducation en langue française dressaient en septembre dernier un portrait troublant de la rétention chez les élèves francophones.

L'AEFO croit que le gouvernement doit investir davantage dans les écoles secondaires de langue française financées par les fonds publics afin de leur permettre d'offrir plus de cours. Cet investissement assurerait une rétention accrue permettant du coup d'augmenter le taux de diplomation.

Depuis septembre 2005, deux crédits d'éducation coopérative peuvent compter au nombre des crédits obligatoires nécessaires pour obtenir le diplôme d'études secondaires.

L'AEFO est d'avis que le modèle d'éducation coopérative qui fait ses preuves depuis plusieurs années constitue un excellent moyen d'offrir aux élèves un apprentissage équivalent encadrés par des enseignantes et des enseignants qualifiés. Ce modèle prévoit des mécanismes

d'évaluation des élèves, respecte les exigences en matière de santé et de sécurité et permet à l'école de faire les suivis appropriés auprès des employeurs externes.

L'éducation coopérative pose toutefois des défis particuliers aux écoles de langue française à cause de la difficulté, dans bien des régions, à identifier et à recruter des employeurs de langue française. Ici, je pense que je peux parler d'expérience, ayant enseigné à Cornwall, où je devais, comme enseignant d'éducation coopérative, travailler très fort, mettre beaucoup d'énergie et voyager plusieurs kilomètres afin d'assurer que l'on puisse trouver des employeurs francophones qui pouvaient desservir nos élèves.

J'ai le même problème quand j'enseigne à l'université aux enseignants, qui doivent prendre l'éducation coopérative, pour leur faire comprendre l'importance d'aller créer les partenariats et de ne pas se limiter. C'est important parce qu'on ne veut pas—et c'est la phrase suivante ici—que les stages d'éducation coopérative qui se déroulent en anglais deviennent une nouvelle source d'assimilation pour les élèves. C'est très, très important pour eux.

L'AEFO est d'avis qu'il faudrait investir des ressources supplémentaires pour aider les écoles à établir davantage de partenariats avec des employeurs francophones.

Donc, l'AEFO recommande l'augmentation de l'offre de cours dans des écoles secondaires de langue française comme moyen de retenir des élèves à l'école et de hausser les taux de diplomation.

L'AEFO recommande d'augmenter la place de l'éducation coopérative dans des écoles de langue française et d'appuyer les écoles dans l'établissement de partenariats avec les employeurs francophones : enseignantes qualifiées ou enseignants qualifiés et apprentissage équivalent.

L'AEFO trouve alarmant que le fondement du projet de loi 52, en ce qui touche l'apprentissage équivalent, semble remettre en question l'importance que l'éducation des élèves secondaires soit livrée par des enseignantes et des enseignants qualifiés.

De nombreuses exigences sont en place pour assurer aux élèves francophones un enseignement de qualité par une enseignante qualifiée ou un enseignant qualifié. Vous avez ici huit grands domaines où on s'assure de la qualité de la préparation des enseignants, ce qu'on exige pour nos enseignantes et nos enseignants. Vous les avez énumérés ici et je vais en prendre quelques-uns : entre autres, la formation initiale offerte par des universités pour l'obtention du baccalauréat en éducation est d'une durée d'un an. Les cours offerts y traitent notamment du développement de la personne et de pédagogie et comprennent des stages pratiques en milieu scolaire.

1030

Vous savez que—on sait tous, n'est-ce pas—les enseignantes et les enseignants doivent obtenir et maintenir une carte de compétence de l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario. Alors, vous allez pouvoir lire pour vous-mêmes les exigences qu'on a pour les enseignants.

Le gouvernement se préoccupe depuis plusieurs années de l'embauche de personnes—et c'est bien—non qualifiées pour combler les postes d'enseignement dans les écoles financées par les fonds publics. Or, le projet de loi 52 ne prévoit aucun mécanisme pour assurer que l'apprentissage équivalent soit dispensé par des enseignantes et des enseignants qualifiés détenant une carte de compétence de l'ordre ou sur leur surveillance.

L'AEFO croit fermement que les élèves du secondaire ont droit à une éducation de qualité offerte par des enseignantes et des enseignants qualifiés. L'AEFO dénoncera donc avec ferveur toute initiative qui pourrait priver l'élève francophone de ce droit. Et vous pourrez voir la recommandation à cet effet.

Je saute la partie pour arriver à la conclusion. Très brièvement, je dis ceci : L'AEFO maintient que les nouvelles initiatives ne doivent pas porter atteinte aux droits des élèves des écoles secondaires financées par les deniers publics de recevoir une éducation de qualité dispensée par des enseignantes et des enseignants qualifiés. L'AEFO s'opposera fermement à toute initiative qui pourrait priver l'élève francophone de ce droit.

L'AEFO réitère également l'importance d'offrir aux élèves des écoles secondaires de langue française des organisations d'apprentissage équivalent en français dans des milieux francophones.

Les recommandations formulées dans le présent document s'ajoutent à celles du mémoire déjà soumis au comité.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Le Président: Merci beaucoup. Ça c'est tout le temps. Merci pour votre députation ce matin.

JACK BRUCE

The Chair: Our next deputation will be from Mr. Jack Bruce. Is Mr. Jack Bruce in the room? Please be seated. Make yourself comfortable. You have 10 minutes for your deputation. If you leave any time remaining, it will go to the parties in rotation. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then proceed.

Mr. Jack Bruce: My name is Jack Bruce. I'm from Hamilton. I thank you all for this opportunity to address my concerns regarding Bill 52.

I am a public high school teacher because I find the profession an honourable one. Ontario's public education system is honourable because: It strives to provide equal opportunity for all students; it covers the cost of education for all students; it is accountable; and its employees are dedicated professionals.

Bill 52 threatens to undermine these honourable qualities. If implemented, Bill 52 will not improve the public education system. It will erode the public education system. Briefly, I will express my concerns regarding dual credits for college and university students. I will then express concerns regarding external credits for applied and workplace students. Finally, I will use ABC etc., a non-profit, arm's-length corporation that could be enabled by Bill 52 to offer external credits, to show how

damaging dual and external credits can be on the public education system.

Dual credits for colleges and universities, while attractive for post-secondary administrators, will not serve the interests of public education or students. I'm sure you have heard and will hear more about the limitations of community colleges and universities to deliver high school curriculum. They do college and university well. I can touch on these later, if you so desire.

Our public secondary school system is preparing students very well for university. In fact, when it comes to university-bound students, the public system is not in trouble, although there's always room for improvement. Indeed, the Alan King report, commissioned by the Ministry of Education and written by Alan King of Queen's University in 2005, reveals that the proportion of students going directly to university from secondary school has increased from 27% to 33% since 2000. I see no need to force these students to take dual and external credits, although I do see the ministry cutting costs and post-secondary institutions profiting.

Our public system is currently underfunded and, as the Alan King report reveals, it is the applied and workplace students who are bearing the brunt of the shortfalls. School boards and the ministry recognize the problem and are working to reduce class sizes for applied and workplace students. Continue to reduce the class sizes, provide support for staff and resources. Do not push students out of high school to fend for themselves or to attain credits outside of the system. King calls for curriculum revision for applied, workplace and college courses. I urge you to recognize curriculum revision within the public system.

King recognizes that few workplace courses are offered across the province. Provide the funding to allow schools to run workplace courses and you will see improved success and reduced dropout rates for workplace students. When workplace students are forced to struggle in college courses, students, teachers and other educators within the system are strained.

Bill 52 will further erode the number of students applying for workplace courses, as these students will need to take dual and external credits. Four dual or external credits out of 30 is a 13% reduction in students, teachers, support staff, school administration, education assistants and courses offered; eight dual or external credits is a 27% reduction. Help students by giving them an opportunity to benefit from all that the public education system has to offer. Do not let Bill 52 limit student access to public school.

For my last point, I wish to state my concerns regarding who will be able to offer and profit from dual and external credits.

First of all, the public education system is accountable to the public. Non-profit organizations, private organizations and individuals who will provide external credits may not be accountable to publicly elected trustees. A school board is accountable to trustees and the public.

I work for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. ABC etc. stands for Adult-Based Continuing Edu-

cation Training Corp. This is a non-profit corporation that currently offers a wide variety of educational services and products. Employees of the HWDSB work for ABC etc. I am concerned that ABC etc. could be in a position to generate revenue through dual and external credits. ABC etc. already charges for tutoring high school students and offering an adult skills improvement general education diploma preparation course. I'm concerned that with HWDSB employees working for ABC etc., students may be directed to take dual and external credits through ABC etc. Money that would have stayed in the public school board will leave with the students. Once it's given to a non-profit corporation, that money is more difficult to trace and is more difficult to be held accountable for than if it's given to the school board. If the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board currently receives \$1,200 per course per student, and a non-profit organization is able to offer that course at a reduced amount online, that non-profit organization stands to make money. ABC etc. may be allowed to charge students, in addition, and make more money.

Secondly, the quality of instruction will suffer under Bill 52. Non-profit organizations such as ABC etc. will not be under obligation to hire certified teachers. Even if they do hire certified teachers, ABC etc. and such non-profit organizations may not have to honour the school board's contractual obligations. Class sizes and workloads could be greater for such teachers. With fewer teaching positions available in the public system potentially, because over one quarter of the 30 credits required to graduate could be mandated to dual and external credits, new teachers may be forced to work for other organizations at lower wages with poorer benefits, creating greater stress for them.

Thirdly, quality of curriculum will likely suffer. Why would students choose one external provider over another? They may offer incentives to choose them. For example, they may offer shortened credits with fewer assignments and easier evaluations. All dual and external credit providers may start competing, potentially watering down credit criteria. Other boards, realizing that reduced student rolls also reduce revenue, may also either lead or create their own non-profit corporations to compete against colleges, universities and other dual and external credit providers. There's great potential for less money to go to students and teachers and more money to go to board or other administration. Non-profit corporations can generate large salaries for their employees. Currently, public servants earning more than \$100,000 annually must be identified. Will the salaries of employees of non-profit corporations and individuals who are allowed to offer external credit have to be made public? What is to stop private corporations from offering external credits?

I'm concerned about adequate checks and balances against individuals, non-profit corporations and post-secondary institutions profiting from Bill 52 at the expense of students, and I see great potential for problems.

Bill 52, with its four to eight dual and external credits, will herald in a voucher-type system that will undermine

the funding principles of public education, the principles that make me proud to be a teacher. As with other privatized services such as health care, administration will benefit at the expense of others in the system.

Bill 52 isn't needed. It doesn't address the issues that are of concern, and it's not a balm for an ailing public system.

1040

The Chair: Thank you very much. We should have time for a question from the government side.

Mr. McMeekin: Thanks very much for your presentation. Like you, I'm concerned, and I believe our government is concerned, about the quality of instruction and the need for checks and balances. I just want to let you know this. That's why the Student Success Commission has gathered stakeholder groups, including virtually all of the major teacher associations, to actually help us with the task of hanging the fruit on the foundational branches, the tree we're trying to build through this legislation. While the thrust is to have our most valuable resource, namely, our young people, learning longer, we also want them learning something that is valuable, and we want to work out those connections. I wanted first of all to provide you that bit of assurance. We're doing a lot of really good work there. Your associations are doing a lot of really good work—the stakeholders.

You said you're with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. I know you've got a very progressive director of education there, Dr. Spence, doing some exciting outreach-partnership types of things. Has the Hamilton-Wentworth board, to the best of your knowledge, taken a position on Bill 52?

Mr. Bruce: I don't know.

Mr. McMeekin: You don't know that. Are you having conversations with your own school board about their perspective of the potential impact of Bill 52?

Mr. Bruce: From my perspective as an individual teacher within a school, I've had discussions with administration, but not beyond that. They're still coming up to speed on it.

Mr. McMeekin: Okay. Thanks very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much for having come in this morning and for giving us your deputation.

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, district 23: Sherry Mancuso, Kelly Morin-Currie. Are you in the room? No. Mr. Norm Uhrig for Sara Waite? No. Is Cynthia Dann-Beardsley in the room? No. Toronto Parent Network, Cathy Dandy? No. Is Chantal Mancini in the room? No.

RYAN SCOTT

The Chair: Ryan Scott? Okay. Ryan, have a seat. Thank you for coming in this morning. Thanks for being early. If you've been here a little while, you get the general procedure. You have 10 minutes for your deputation. If you leave any time remaining, it will be divided among the parties for questions, depending on

who's next in the rotation. Please begin by stating your name for the purposes of Hansard, and then proceed.

Mr. Ryan Scott: My name is Ryan Scott. I'm a secondary school teacher from the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board at Ancaster High School. I came here to speak to the standing committee today to voice the concerns I have with Bill 52.

I'm concerned that Bill 52 will negatively affect the educational opportunities provided to students. I'm concerned that Bill 52 will reduce the chances of young, trained, professional teachers of maintaining and achieving a permanent teaching position in Ontario. I'm most of all concerned that these negative impacts are caused for merely political gains, not actual tangible results that could equally be achieved through increases in funding to our already-working programs in place.

The proposed legislation amends the Education Act to include opportunities for what are described as equivalent learnings. The Education Act would now allow post-secondary institutions, which are not governed by the Education Act or subjected to the scrutiny of the Ministry of Education, nor its instructors subjected to the scrutiny and discipline of the Ontario College of Teachers, to award credits that will help a student fulfill the requirements of the Ontario secondary school diploma.

I have a number of concerns regarding the addition of colleges and universities to join publicly funded school systems in granting high school or secondary school credits. I'm concerned because the programming that will be put in place by universities and colleges doesn't logically seem to be geared towards the at-risk students, students who are in danger of dropping out of high school. Students who are in the university- or college-bound streams are not at significant risk of leaving school. It is the workplace students who are at risk of not achieving their credits, and I fail to see how colleges and universities will want to provide programming to students who are having difficulties adapting to the already academic streams provided by the public education system. Without legislating that the courses offered by colleges and universities be geared towards the applied, workplace-bound students, these students who seem to be the target of Bill 52 will be ignored by these institutions and what we will have left is either a voucher or a two-tier education system whereby those who will be able to afford these courses provided by colleges and universities will be able to supplement their secondary school diploma, but lower- and middle-class families that cannot provide their sons and daughters these opportunities will be left behind.

Another concern I have with regard to the inclusion of colleges and universities as providers of secondary school credits is that I fear that with these new relationships between students and institutions, there will be barriers for students who are unable to take these classes in actually reaching these institutions further on down the road. They will have difficulty gaining access to these institutions if there already are relationships in place between students who have paid for credits from these

institutions and if they are just applying as a recipient of their Ontario secondary school diploma.

Another concern that I have regarding Bill 52 is that it will cost myself as well as many other teachers new to the profession our livelihood. Bill 52 proposes, for post-secondary institutions; community, provincial and national youth groups; and any employer that provides training or valuable knowledge or work experience the ability to grant credits that would be put towards the Ontario secondary school diploma. There have been numbers that have been passed around that either four or up to eight credits, within a few years of the bill's proposed life, would be allowed to be applied towards the Ontario secondary school diplomas. As the previous presenter mentioned, that's 27% of credits that will be able to be outsourced to these institutions. That means that there will be 27% less need on the part of the public education system for teachers, support staff and facilities because of the reduction in student credits being offered.

Because of the speed at which Bill 52 is being implemented and the fact that all students, even those who are not in danger of leaving the secondary system, will be eligible to participate in these equivalent learnings, thereby reducing the need for certified teachers in this province, this government will have a new phrase to consider: the at-risk teacher. I, along with thousands of students, have recently graduated from the faculty of education in this province and have been fortunate enough to receive employment by the ministry and a school in this province within the first year of graduation. I have many friends and fellow students who weren't as fortunate. These students will have to seek meaningful employment either in the educational field in other provinces or at lower pay and reduced benefits through these bodies that aren't affiliated with the Ministry of Education.

I joined this profession because I wanted to empower young people to pursue their passions, as I have myself as a lifelong learner, and I feel that Bill 52 will allow people who do not share the same passion, the same interest in student success, to practise in the teaching profession. It will be an opportunity for people to gain access to funding in order to either subsidize their employment costs or just to make a profit. These letter-of-permission or letter-of-approval teachers will create a two-tier education system in this province. There will be teachers who are certified, who are trained and are able to handle a variety of problems that can occur in a classroom, and then there will be people who are purely in it for the funds that would normally go through the school boards.

For such a drastic restructuring of the public education system, I hope that there is a clear and logical argument being made in favour of those in favour of this restructuring. I, however, have yet to hear one clear, logical reason presented by this government as to why we need to open our public education system to private interests and, as a result, cost hundreds, if not thousands, of teachers—trained, energetic and young teachers—their jobs.

1050

The government has announced their student success initiative, where they're trying to raise graduation rates to 85%, yet they have not made the public aware of the data they used to determine this statistic. In doing research for my presentation here today, I came across a StatsCan labour force survey of Ontario citizens aged 20 to 24, where only 9.1%—and that's an average over the past three academic years—have dropped out. Their definition of students not having dropped out is that they're either in school or have received their OSSD. So it would seem to me that, according to this survey, the government has already reached its 85% success rate of granting students their OSSDs. If not, they're 5% above that before actually implementing these changes proposed in Bill 52. This also shows that there are programs in place for students who have left the secondary stream to re-enter it later on and, in their early 20s, get their secondary school education and become meaningfully employed in this province.

The Chair: Ryan, you've got about 90 seconds.

Mr. Scott: I will then conclude by thanking the standing committee for hearing my concerns today, and I welcome any questions that anyone would care to ask.

The Chair: In slightly less than that, Mr. Klees, have you got a question for Ryan Scott?

Mr. Klees: Not in under 30 seconds. I just want to thank you for your presentation. We're hopeful that the government is hearing you.

Mr. Scott: I am too.

Mr. Klees: We've heard that there isn't one teacher in the province of Ontario who supports this bill, and so we're going to be questioning the government as to why, with all of the stakeholders opposed to it, they continue to persist in moving this forward.

Mr. Scott: As I said in my introduction, I fear that the gains achieved by this bill will be purely political, and that no tangible results translating into student success can be achieved with this legislation.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Ryan.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 23
EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT STAFF

The Chair: Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, District 23: Sherry Mancuso and Kelly Morin-Currie. Good morning and welcome. I think we all have your written submission. You'll have 20 minutes to give your oral submission. If you leave any time remaining, it will be distributed to the parties in rotation. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then proceed.

Mr. Marchese: Ten minutes.

The Chair: Ten minutes, yes. Did I say 20? I stand corrected. It's 10 minutes.

Interjection.

Ms. Kelly Morin-Currie: Yes, I could use 20.

Good morning. My name is Kelly Morin-Currie, and at some point you may see Sherry Mancuso sitting beside me. We've had difficulty getting in this morning with the traffic, and I apologize for being late. I'm the district officer for OSSTF district 23. Sherry Mancuso is the president of the educational support staff, the bargaining unit of OSSTF 23. We're pleased to be able to make this submission to the standing committee of the Legislature on Bill 52, the Learning to Age 18 Act. We are here on behalf of the ESS unit, our educational support staff, which represents more than 210 educational workers employed in the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board as educational assistants, child and youth workers, school secretaries, board office personnel, computer technicians and library technicians.

Bill 52 clearly has ramifications for both the secondary school students and educational workers in our board. The bill allows for the introduction of widespread external credits by unspecified and unlimited providers of equivalent learning, much to our detriment. Our concerns revolve around the suitability of equivalent learning opportunities provided by non-board personnel, especially since the provision of equivalent learning opportunities, as you are no doubt aware, is already addressed in the document known as Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9-12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999.

As child and youth workers and educational assistants, we work with some of the most needy students in our school classrooms and other board learning locations. It is within the parameters of our jobs to assist teachers in the day-to-day delivery of regular and specially developed courses. We complement the teachers by providing one-on-one assistance and small-group intervention to allow teachers to spend significant periods of time with other students in our classes.

Bill 52's implications for our students are immense. We worry that our students and support staff may well be involved with equivalent learning providers who will not be able or will not be willing to ensure protection for our students afforded by the multitude of safeguards, such as the provincial legislation of the Safe Schools Act and the requirement for criminal background checks. These providers will have no legislated responsibility to communicate with parents, resulting in much-reduced access to the instructor for feedback regarding student progress, attendance and behaviour. Students and parents will not have the security afforded by the professional standards, scrutiny and discipline procedures of the Ontario College of Teachers.

We worry that our students may well be recipients of credits which will not be seen as equivalent learning by future employers and the general public. Just how valuable will Jenny's experience working with Sandy Landscaping be, for example, if her time in acquiring the equivalent learning consists mainly of cutting and trimming grass and spreading a sand and salt mixture on parking lots? Will she in fact be eligible for the equivalent learning of an environmental studies credit? Will Billy's experience as a 4-H club leader be equivalent to a

peer leadership credit? In our opinion, the answer is a resounding no.

As board office personnel or school secretaries, whose routines require contact with parents, involvement with school attendance and late records, and support for classroom teachers, we would feel uncomfortable administering work for outside equivalent learning providers which may be in contradiction to board policies and procedures. It raises many questions such as: Will we be involved in any administration of the drivers' licence provisions? Will these providers be bound by the various board policies with regard to special education, privacy and safe schools? Will an equivalent learning provider recognize that students are in need of the support or protection of board/ministry educational team support services?

For example, currently in our board we have an educational support team that includes speech pathologists, CYWs and EAs. This support team, in consultation with the teaching staff, assesses the needs of the student, and the best plan of care for that student will be developed and implemented with the appropriate support worker. Let's assume students are attending a course of study offered by an outside group or organization. The students are having difficulty with literacy or numeracy; perhaps a speech path is required. We know that if the student were part of the board, their needs would be provided by the best possible support team staff.

Also, in the Grand Erie board, for which we represent the support staff, the staff are credit recovery teachers. It's the Turning Point program, which is brand new; you've been very successful with this pilot project and these programs. There is a turning point attached to each one of our secondary schools taught by credit recovery teachers and supported by support staff. These students are able to go out into the community on co-op programs, they're employed, and they're earning an income through their employment while they're going to school. This is what you have in place now and it's very successful for these needy students and the students you're trying to consider within this bill. You have programs in place that are working well now.

As a computer or library technician, we will see the loss of equipment, materials and support for existing students as the grants associated with equivalent learning credits are deposited into the accounts of those providers. We scramble now to provide and maintain appropriate and up-to-date facilities. How will we be able to competently do our jobs as the funding base diminishes? Just because enrolment decreases, it does not mean the demand for our services diminishes; in fact, for support workers, it's quite the opposite.

Our board currently provides extensive learning opportunities for our students. Qualified secondary school teachers deliver and supervise co-operative education experiences. Students, depending on interest, have the opportunity to be involved in an OYAP pre-apprenticeship experience. Each school has credit recovery initiatives. We offer alternative education outside of the school buildings. Each school has a student success

teacher. Our board partners in a successful and appropriately designed dual credit program with the Grand Erie District School Board in co-operation with Fanshawe College, providing a school within a college recapture program—very successful. So successful, in fact, that we have two programs operating now in both of our colleges in the area.

OSSTF district 23 ESS has grave concerns with the nature of the equivalent learning program in Bill 52. We believe that appropriate equivalent learning opportunities are currently available and are being offered in many boards. Expanding and increasing the availability of equivalent learning opportunities is already possible under Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9-12: Program and Diploma Requirements. Therefore, Bill 52 is not necessary. Ongoing funding for successful pilot projects is needed.

The implementation of Bill 52 could lead to a devaluation of the Ontario secondary school diploma and the secondary school environment in Ontario. No amendments are possible which would adequately prevent the harm caused by the introduction of widespread equivalent learning credits by unspecified and unlimited providers of equivalent learning. The ESS bargaining unit of OSSTF district 23 recommends that Bill 52 be withdrawn.

1100

The Chair: Thank you very much. We'll have time for a question. Mr. Marchese.

Mr. Marchese: Thank you, Kelly. I agreed with your last statement: You can't modify the bill and it should be rejected.

I'm puzzled by the motives around this. I know that Mike Harris would have liked this bill, and to try to outdo that kind of politics by a Liberal administration is, I think, not very smart. You're almost helping them by saying, "Look, you are doing things that you can take credit for and expand," and you mention a number of things. You've got the credit recovery teachers; you've got youth apprenticeship programs; you've got the co-op programs; you've got SALEP, the supervised alternative learning programs; and the student success teachers that they can take credit for. They can say so many things about how great they are, and yet they're introducing a bill that doesn't have support from teachers and non-teaching staff. How could this promote peace and stability in the system? I just don't get it. Are you having any luck with anyone in terms of a sense of where this government is going with this bill?

Ms. Morin-Currie: I know that our representatives at OSSTF are dealing with the government on this issue.

Mr. Marchese: I'm sure they are. Any reaction in terms of what you think the government is going to do with this bill, or you don't know yet?

Ms. Morin-Currie: I don't know at the moment. But clearly, we need additional support staff in the schools. That is what's going to make the difference.

Mr. Marchese: Yes, especially the youth workers who deal with those at risk. We lost them under a Con-

servative regime, and instead of replacing these youth workers who deal with kids at risk, they're not there. I agree with you, absolutely.

Ms. Morin-Currie: Our board is also engaged in several new pilot projects for e-learning as well—the first pilot project in Ontario, which isn't in the material, but it's synchronized e-learning to address issues of needy students as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much for having come in this morning.

SARA WAITE

The Chair: Norm Uhrig. Is Norm Uhrig in the room? Good morning. If you've been here for a little while, you get the general procedure.

Mr. Norm Uhrig: I just came in.

The Chair: You did? All right. Well, it's not very hard. You have 10 minutes to do your deputation. If you leave any time remaining, it will go to the next party in the question rotation to ask you some questions. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then proceed.

Mr. Uhrig: My name's Norm Uhrig. I'm a teacher in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. I'm here to represent Sara Waite, who unfortunately had to attend a funeral today, so she sends her regrets. I'll read her letter, which I think you have in front of you. It's her personal view of how Bill 52 will affect her and her classes.

"My name is Sara Waite, a physics teacher working out of Ancaster High Secondary School in Ancaster, Ontario. I am writing to express my concern over Bill 52's negative implications.

"Specifically, I believe that Bill 52 erodes curricular validity, reduces curricular opportunities and will ultimately work to lower the likelihood that outbound students will be lifelong learners.

"Ontario's recently renovated curriculum was redesigned so that graduating with an OSSD ensured recipients were prepared to become literate, functional, educated, involved citizens. Bill 52, then, works to deteriorate such a strong educational vision.

"Curricular demands require teachers who are certified, trained and passionate educators. When a parent entrusts me with their child's educational upbringing, they do so knowing that my presence in the classroom required both academic and educational training. Likewise, as with most teachers, I have worked to continually upgrade my educational skill set to permit me to better educate said children.

"Unfortunately, Bill 52's equivalent credit structure undermines curricular validity, and thus the public's trust, by permitting uncertified employers to recommend applicable credits. Without an established, audited curriculum the content such providers would impart would be of questionable—and certainly unverifiable—value. Likewise, individual organizations operating without guidance or curriculum could succumb to overly spe-

cified, non-applicable skill sets that work to increase the workplace's goals; currently, education is aimed at increasing society's goals.

"As a teacher in Ontario's public education system, I firmly believe in the right of every student to have access to an equitable, valued, rigorous education based on an accepted curriculum delivered by certified, experienced and passionate teachers. Unfortunately, Bill 52's introduction of dual-credits courses eliminates such trust. No longer will students and parents be able to rest assured that their son or daughter is receiving sanctioned, supported and tested curriculum. No longer will they be able to view our public education system as being free from privatization and two-tiered systems. I cannot accept that a public and publicly funded education system can adopt a program that would implement a fee structure. Equality, after all, is one of our education system's guiding principles.

"Moreover, through Bill 52's ability to outsource credit recommendation to uncertified providers, students may find that their current course options are eliminated due to reduced funding and physical enrolment. The value of a diverse education is evident in the OSSD's current compulsory and optional requirements. That is, students are encouraged and required to explore a variety of academic and application options, whether the area is music or welding.

"Unfortunately, Bill 52 would erode such optional courses at a time when a global education is needed more than ever before. If students are able to confine themselves to areas of current interest, then said students might miss the opportunity that our current OSSD demands—that is, diversified educational opportunities. After all, the expectation that a student can reasonably map their career path at 16 is unrealistic; more to the point, should they have the authority to do so? Our current curriculum is designed to encourage students to explore options they otherwise would not; Bill 52's revised vision limits such choice.

"As such, I urge you to exercise your power and prevent the passage of Bill 52."

The Chair: Thank you very much for your deputation. We should have a few minutes for questions.

Mr. McMeekin: Norm, thanks for coming out and sharing this. It's no accident that we've got a lot of people from Hamilton and Ancaster here today, I can assure you. We were oversubscribed and had to make some choices around who we heard from. So I'm pleased you're here. I wonder if you would take the time to communicate back to Sara my appreciation for her taking the time to write the brief. It's very clear, very specific and, in that context, helpful.

I would just note, Norm, as I have with a couple of other presenters, that the articulated concern, that the bill isn't as "detailed" as it needs to be, is perhaps justifiable, and there's a reason for that. The Student Success Commission, which is incorporating a lot of partners around the table, is meeting to help define, spell out, some of the regulations, some of the linkages, some of the guarantees we're going to need around the integrity of the curri-

culum and what have you. So I just want to make that observation en passant and invite you to communicate that back as well, and perhaps communicate on that. We have a Student Success Commission. We have a curriculum group that's meeting. We have a number of tables that we're gathering stakeholders at. They're doing a lot of very good work. Is that the kind of approach you want your government taking, sitting down and talking to stakeholders about their concerns and trying to articulate those concerns through regulation?

Mr. Uhrig: I would certainly like to see education taught by people who are certified and qualified. Also, I would hate to see us turn to a voucher system—

Mr. McMeekin: I agree.

Mr. Uhrig: —as suggested by a previous government. That kind of a thing devalues the school, because you know yourself that once you reach a critical mass, once that mass is below that, there are no longer options available, the options are gone. So the students who would be able to get their art, get their music, get the welding courses and the shop courses, they will be gone because they can't offer them.

1110

Mr. McMeekin: Norm, let me just give you assurance that it's not the government's intent to move to a voucher system. We understand the importance of highly qualified, trained educational workers who can team with the government and, in appropriate ways, the community, to provide pathways to employment and educational opportunities for kids, and it excludes vouchers.

Mr. Uhrig: Yes, but it becomes a voucher. It may not be called a voucher, but when it's going outside to an employer that's going to be offering a credit—maybe it's through the Minister of Education. As it is right now, credits are recommended by teachers, and it is principals who give the credits, who bestow those credits, because there is a curriculum and there are checks and balances. Right now, we have co-op teachers who are out with our students, and they're certainly able to see what the students are learning. They're also getting the 110 hours of the course, where dual credits would be eliminating that sort of thing.

Mr. McMeekin: Co-op's working well?

Mr. Uhrig: Co-op is working well. Actually, in Hamilton now we have our regular co-op plus a home building course going on, as well as a militia co-op that is just going to be starting next semester. We also have a co-op which takes place at Chedoke Hospital in Hamilton.

The Chair: On that note, I will have to say thank you very much for your deputation and for taking the time to come in this morning.

Mr. Uhrig: Thanks very much.

CYNTHIA DANN-BEARDSLEY

The Chair: Cynthia Dann-Beardsley, please. Is Cynthia Dann-Beardsley in the room? Yes, you are. Good morning. Have a seat, and welcome. You'll have 10 minutes to give your presentation this morning. If you

leave any part of it remaining, it will go to the next party in the rotation for a question. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then proceed.

Ms. Cynthia Dann-Beardsley: Good morning. My name is Cynthia Dann hyphen Beardsley; I have to say the hyphen so that you know it belongs with my last name. I am a parent in Toronto. I live in Toronto and I have three children, one in university and two in high school. My children and I—I as a growing citizen, as a young girl—have all attended public school in Toronto. I'm here today to congratulate the Liberal government for recognizing that it has a public responsibility to address the chaos and destruction created by the Harris administration, a government that deliberately created a crisis in education.

Almost overnight, education became a special interest arena, one that was supposedly ruled by touchy-feely adults who, in their efforts to give children what they needed to succeed, burned up hard-earned public money faster than popcorn burns in a microwave, money that was spent on options and frills like music and swimming pools and sports. Children, parents and taxpayers were tossed about as the new mindset, complete with a matching funding formula, changed—or tried to change—almost everything about our local schools. My children and their friends, my family and my community all felt overwhelmed and exhausted from the lack of transparency and accountability that ruled during those Conservative years. We hung on, supporting the notion of public education as programs and services were torn out of schools, deleted from budgets and mocked by decision-makers who felt that schools were about as extravagant as a can of Reddi-wip to a starving nation.

Now we all gasp as youth violence escalates. It is no longer safe to go downtown to buy shoes at a Boxing Day sale. The alleged gunman in that case was in the age range that should always be referred to as "Harris's children." In fact, I would go so far as to say that almost every incident of youth violence involves Harris's children. These are the ones, the peer group of my daughters, who came up through public education without the proper funding of librarians and libraries, field trips, musical instruments, swimming pools, basketballs, outdoor ed, social workers, truancy officers, attendance counsellors and juicy resources more creative than a textbook.

In compromising—indeed, roadblocking—the academic success of children, the government also compromised the social and economic success of Ontario. It is my understanding that 93% of the workforce comes from a public education. I am still utterly bemused that any decision-maker in any capacity would want to give the future breadwinners of this province an inferior education, and inferior it will be if children fail to stay in school and acquire the knowledge, skills and decision-making abilities that a high school diploma offers them. However, it will take more than an amendment to the Education Act, more than Bill 52 to keep them there.

There is great value in constantly keeping this bill in the news. Taxpayers must be educated or reminded that

education issues are everyone's issues. We are raising the next generation of voters and taxpayers, and the decisions they make and how they vote will affect every single one of us. The government can say that everyone under the age of 18 must be in school, but how will this be enforced? It is difficult enough to get one's teenagers to turn off the computer and come to dinner. What about getting disenfranchised, discouraged, disengaged teens aged 16, 17 and 18 to class every day? How will the government be accountable for ensuring that they ever get to class or get there often enough to get that high school diploma?

If we were able to ask dropouts why they had dropped out, we would likely get as many answers as there were individuals. One answer I'm sure we would not get, or certainly very rarely, is, "I dropped out because I felt like I belonged." Whether it is a club, a committee, a community or a course, people in general show up if they feel that they are fundamental to the success of that group or project, if they feel that someone is counting on them or if they really like it. One out of that group of three is usually enough to keep individual attendance rates high.

Children must be offered a wide variety of programs from the very start of elementary school, programs that instill school pride, team spirit, individual contributions, and a strong sense of satisfaction and success that comes from sequential learning. Children love their school because their cross-country team went to the west city semifinals, or they sang at the Kiwanis festival, or they had a science fair, or they hosted a swim meet. They love being active participants, even if that activity means standing at the sidelines and cheering their hearts out. These kinds of programs all grow out of the ministry-mandated curriculum. Whether schools are delivering the curriculum or whether there are the funds to deliver the outcomes is another question, but it is a question that determines how well a child is engaged in school life.

Convincing a pimply-faced boy in grade 7 or grade 9 to play the viola is a very hard sell. If his only experience with music in the early grades is to clap along with a boom box or to stand up and wriggle and karaoke-sing to the Lion King, the chances of getting him into the school orchestra are quite small. It's the same for sports. If there's no equipment, no teams and no sequential skill development, how will young girls and boys feel the thrill of shouting "yes" when they master something? Self-esteem is built on "I can," not "I am." "I am" is merely narcissism, and narcissism is not what I want for the foundation of my family, my community or my country.

Minister Wynne recently announced new plans to introduce respect and responsibility into the curriculum. What can teach respect and responsibility better than singing in a choir, playing in a band, running in a four-by-four relay or playing on a soccer team?

If you look at Hungary, the top graduates from teachers' college go to teach kindergarten, because that country believes the beginning is the most important. When you fund from the beginning, you fund success.

Children who learn to join and to contribute go on to do the same in high school. They value their school, their classmates, their teammates and their teachers. Studies from the United States show that schools that have established and supported arts and sports programs have lower dropout rates and lower delinquency rates than schools that don't. Surely that fact must say something about what keeps students in schools.

One of the predictors of staying in school until graduation is whether or not students establish a meaningful relationship with a teacher. Who are constant teachers in children's lives? The music teacher, the drama teacher, the phys ed teacher, the librarian, the guidance counsellor and the youth worker. The very woman who cuts my hair dropped out of school the year that her drama teacher went on maternity leave and was not replaced. The program died, and so did the school spirit and the self-esteem of this young woman. Even good students will hit a point in their high school careers where school just seems boring, or their social life is low, or they are having an identity crisis. If they are part of the orchestra or on the swim team, they will still be coming to school, if nothing else but to be with their friends and see the teacher.

1120

I came from a family who had little to offer me when it came to music. I said "Devorak" when I saw the name Dvořák. I didn't know what a cello was or even how to spell it, and I had never been to the Toronto Symphony. But I went to school in Toronto, where you had to take music, taught by qualified, certified teachers. I played music that sounded like a million bucks and made me feel worth 10 times that \$1 million. All this, as my gambler father left the family for good.

I went to university, something that my parents had never done, and ended up having a wonderful career, thanks to public education. I've written for the Financial Post and worked for the CBC because the Toronto Board of Education provided me with a juicy education beyond the textbooks.

For those of you who like quantifiable numbers, 47% of the executives on the Fortune 500 list studied music, compared to the national average of 17% or 18%.

In closing, I ask that you look at children from the very beginning of their school lives. Give them quality, sequential, fully funded programs in music, drama and sports, taught by teacher specialists during the regular classroom day; give them that from day one. Continue to fund and support programs, teachers and resources right through to grade 12, and you will give students a reason to be in school and you will give them living proof that putting their nose to the grindstone pays off, and you will give them a reason to be with friends. The health, safety and education of these children all depend on you, and the economic and social future of Ontario depends on them.

The Chair: That does conclude the time that we have for you this morning. Thank you for coming in and for making your deputation.

The Toronto Parent Network: Cathy Dandy. Is Cathy Dandy in the room? Chantal Mancini.

LEISHA DAWSON

The Chair: Please be seated. Make yourself comfortable. You'll have 10 minutes for your deputation this morning. If you leave any time remaining, it will go to the parties, in rotation. Begin by stating your name for Hansard and then proceed.

Ms. Chantal Mancini: My name is Chantal Mancini. I want to thank you for hearing my concerns today. I am reading a letter by Leisha Dawson, whom I'm actually substituting for. I'm going to read you her letter.

"I have always been a proud Canadian—a proud citizen of Ontario. Today, I do not feel proud. I feel fear and anxiety. Bill 52 is going to hinder the future success of our youth. Bill 52 is the outsourcing of public education because of how it will affect the quality of teaching, quality of learning, quality of living and the quality of values.

"I believe strongly in the quality of teaching. While completing my bachelor of education, student teachers were told to see teaching as part science and part art. The science is the knowledge and the art is the skill and enthusiasm that you bring to the classroom. It is a challenge that teachers achieve every day. This cannot be said about the dual and external credit providers. These providers are not Ontario College of Teachers certified and are not knowledgeable on the Ontario secondary school curriculum. They are not knowledgeable on how to address the concerns of special-needs students and are not subject to the teacher performance appraisal process. The OCT's standards of practice and the ethical standards will not apply to these providers. Nor will these providers be required to provide criminal background checks or legislated to communicate with parents. In order to become a professional teacher, I agreed to these high standards and employment terms. Moreover, I am strongly encouraged to improve myself with additional qualification courses. These providers are under no such obligation or requirement to any of this. We don't need to outsource public education to those who do not have the necessary qualifications, the commitment to teaching adolescents and the desire for self-improvement through additional qualification courses. These providers will mar the quality of teaching.

"Unfortunately, Bill 52's potential providers will deface the quality of learning. Every day I witness professionals in diverse roles assisting young people in graduating from secondary school. This cannot be said about the dual and external credit providers. These dual and external credit courses are allowed to be merely 45-65 hours in duration versus the intense 110 hours that are in the OSS courses. Unlike the OSS courses, the dual and external credit courses do not state clearly the high standards in curriculum, evaluation, accessibility and safety that the citizens of Ontario expect from their public education. The dual and external credit courses will devas-

tate the much-needed technology courses. During my training at Lakehead University, I took the Initiative to College, Trades and Workplace course. It was in this class that I heard the concerns of the tradespeople in Ontario. In the past 20 years, the enrolment in the trades has been dismal at best. The trade representatives wanted the Ministry of Education and school boards to invest more money into OSS technology courses. They wanted students to get the necessary hours and training required in order to obtain an apprenticeship position. They wanted the students to gain experience on the latest technology that would make them less of a risk to the tradesperson. These dual and external credit courses will remove the legitimacy of the OSS technology courses. The OSS technology courses have certified technology teachers who are able to give the students necessary hours in training so they can obtain an apprenticeship position. These dual and external credit courses will only diminish the trades in the public's mind and force the tradespeople to question the validity and legitimacy of all OSS technology courses, which are vital to all students. These OSS technology courses are especially important to at-risk students who struggle in the compulsory courses.

"The pursuit of a better future should not blemish the quality of life. The dual and external credit courses will force families to allocate resources from other areas in order to upgrade their children's education. Low-income families will not be able to send their children to higher education because the additional costs will be too great for them. They will not be able to pay the high prices that the private education providers will demand, nor will the families be able to pay for the potential user fees that will be demanded. Instead of giving their children enriching experiences at museums, art galleries, theatres, nature conservation areas and sporting events, they will be forced to spend valuable resources on courses that were once offered by the boards. The quality of life will be sullied. More young people will be discouraged from experiencing our culturally rich history.

"Bill 52 will subvert the quality of values. Indentured servitude has been deemed unlawful in Canada for a long time, yet under Bill 52, indentured servitude will gain legitimacy and funding by the Ministry of Education. Many students who are developing a strong work ethic will be undermined by the dual and external credit courses. It will no longer be beneficial to hire students in entry-level positions. Employing students will be a financial liability that potential providers can do without. The dual and external credit courses will leave students vulnerable and unemployed. The Ministry of Education will be teaching students that loyalty, determination and a strong work ethic are not valued by society. Along with a strong work ethic, adolescents need to develop the value of learning for life. The times of working for the same employer in the same position are over. The younger generation needs to be able to adapt to the ever-changing environment. It is an expectation that society has for its labour force. It is improbable that the potential providers

will be able to teach this survival skill to adolescents. These potential providers enshrine the notion that it is acceptable to stop learning once they reach a certain age. This notion will doom the future generations to poverty and hardship. It is only under the tutelage of professional lifelong learners that young people will develop this ability. Teachers are professional lifelong learners. We strive to learn new skills and knowledge that we can bring into the classroom. As lifelong learners, we are role models who continually strive to improve professionally and personally.

"I am a new breed of teacher. Upon graduating from university in 1991, I entered and remained in the workforce in a variety of capacities. While in the workforce, I realized that I was meant to be a secondary school teacher. In order to achieve my goal, I worked a full-time job during the day and completed a full-time university course load in the evenings for two years. I did this because I wanted to be a teacher. Presently, I am teaching part time as a long-term occasional teacher, as well as working two other part-time positions. Every day I look for ways to help my students make connections to the material I am teaching. I know I am a strong, positive role model. I have metamorphosed into a teacher and it is at this point that I am filled with fear and anxiety. The reality is that my dream of being a teacher has changed into a nightmare of unemployment. I recognize that if Bill 52 goes through, then I will be one of the first teachers to be unemployed. Students will be encouraged to get their education from uncertified and unqualified providers. They will no longer be allowed to return and upgrade through the boards once they reach 18 years of age or upon graduation. Postgraduate students who need more time to develop and succeed in the future will no longer be in my classroom. Optional courses that can keep at-risk students in school will face reduced funding. The teaching of mainly compulsory courses will mean less teaching positions for new teachers like me. My options are limited. I will be forced to leave the teaching profession, or remain in the teaching profession but leave the province or country.

"Please kill Bill 52. It is not necessary. Boards already have a lot of local programs that address the concerns for at-risk students. Do not penalize the future generations by outsourcing public education.

"Yours truly,
"Leisha Dawson."
Thank you.

1130

The Chair: Thank you. We should have time for a question. Mr. Klees.

Mr. Klees: Ms. Mancini, it's difficult to ask you questions about the content of this letter, of course. Could I ask you, are you a teacher?

Ms. Mancini: I am.

Mr. Klees: So, if you don't mind, let me just direct a question to you. Do you share the sentiments of this letter and the need to kill Bill 52?

Ms. Mancini: Yes, I do.

Mr. Klees: Okay. This is now the third day of public hearings on this bill. Except for the last presenter, who said she supports the bill—I wish we had had time to question her as to why—there has not been a presenter who has come forward to say they support the bill. We heard today that there isn't a teacher in the province of Ontario who supports the bill. Do you have any musings about why this government would bring this bill forward when stakeholders in education so strongly oppose every aspect of it? What could be the motivation?

Ms. Mancini: Personally, I believe that the values are shifting. You've got corporate values and privatization infiltrating all aspects of our society. I think that's where it's going. I fear that corporate values will not view students as persons but as human resources only. I find that incredibly frightening. I think it's part of the move to privatization that the Liberal government has shown in other areas, such as health care.

Mr. Klees: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for coming in and for taking the time to make your deputation this morning.

One more time, we'll try Toronto Parent Network, Cathy Dandy? All right.

CARMELO IACHELLI

The Chair: Carmelo Iachelli? Good morning and welcome. You have 10 minutes to make your deputation this morning. If you leave any time remaining, it will go to questions in rotation. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and proceed.

Mr. Carmelo Iachelli: My full name is Carmelo Iachelli. I would just like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to voice my concerns today over Bill 52. I am currently a high school teacher with the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, and I appear before you today as a concerned teacher and parent, one with a vested interest in the future of public education in this province. I apologize now if what I say is redundant or repetitive. However, perhaps there is a message to be gained by this.

It is my belief that Bill 52 and the introduction of dual and external credits with unspecified and unlimited providers of equivalent learning will undermine the OSSD, providing a number of concerns, including the safety and well-being of our students.

I have been a certified English and drama teacher in Ontario for close to 10 years. Coming from a theatre background, my true passion is, of course, drama, and I have spent many years trying to build the program in my school and in the community. Since starting my career teaching the old curriculum, I have seen first-hand the negative effects of the new curriculum on the school boards, the administrators, the teachers and, most importantly, the students. Optional courses like dramatic arts, music, dance, art and technology have all been victims of the numbers game, as students try to fit five years of secondary education into four. Non-required

subjects are no longer an option for the fast-tracking student who wants to graduate before their 17th birthday.

Bill 52 and the mandatory inclusion of dual/external credit courses would further reduce the number of options available for students in the future and, in my mind, apply even more pressure to find a career path in an ultra-competitive post-secondary world.

As seen with the education model from British Columbia, most dual credits will be offered in the fine arts, such as music, dance and drama, once again stripping away another layer from these fragile disciplines. Speaking as one who entered teaching from the world of professional theatre, I can only say that this can be a dangerous move. As the coordinator of the Sears Ontario Drama Festival in our region, every year it is my responsibility to hire an adjudicator who must publicly and privately critique and award students for their efforts on stage. After years of experience, I am now keenly aware of the benefits of an adjudicator who comes from a teaching background. Understanding and sensitivity towards the students' needs are always a priority for those with classroom experience, while this is not necessarily the case for qualified instructors from the professional field, where honest and, at times, harsh criticism is the desired choice.

Finally, does the offering of dual credits in the fine arts really serve the interests of those students who are at high risk of not achieving their OSSD? In my own experience, I would say that most students interested in the fine arts have an extremely high graduation rate. By extending dual credits to these relatively successful students, are we not opening the door to voucher-style education?

In closing, Bill 52 makes very few provisions for issues such as the ones I mention to you today, and I am sure there are countless others you have heard in numerous presentations to the standing committee. The negative effects of such an open-ended and ambiguous piece of legislation could be catastrophic to an already vulnerable public system. We do not need this bill to ensure student success. Let our province's teachers do the teaching and, in doing so, provide our students with a well-balanced curriculum filled with choice and handled with sensitivity. Thank you.

The Chair: And thank you for a very tight and concise brief. Mr. Marchese, you've been left a generous amount of time for questions.

Mr. Marchese: Thank you, Carmelo. I agree with your statement. I have a few questions. You heard one of the parents, Cynthia Dann?

Mr. Iachelli: Yes, I was here.

Mr. Marchese: I tend to agree with what she said, although I disagree with her in terms of her support of the bill, because I don't think the bill—

Mr. Iachelli: I didn't hear that.

Mr. Marchese: Okay. In the beginning, she said she supported the bill, and then she talked about other things we need in the system that we're not getting, quite frankly. I agree with her that we need more art teachers. We've seen a diminishing number of art teachers in our

school system. It started with these guys over here to my right and it continues with the Liberals. We are seeing a reduction in the music programs—an incredible reduction under the Tories, and of late, I believe the government has increased that number a little bit so they can claim they've increased the number. But in terms of where we were compared to where we are today, there's a decreasing number of music teachers, a decreasing number of teacher-librarians, a decreasing number of physical education teachers. In fact, I just can't believe that we're requiring kids to do 20 minutes of jumping up and down; we don't have physical education teachers. We need more guidance teachers. We need youth workers. You heard Kelly Morin talk about the need for youth workers to help kids at risk. We need more special education programs, not fewer. We need more English-as-a-second-language. If we had all that, it would probably help these kids to stay in school. Don't you agree with that?

Mr. Iachelli: Yes. Being a teacher of 10 years, I have seen the change from the new curriculum to this, and I don't see it getting any better. I see this as another strip to the public system, as is happening with health care as well. Perhaps that's a bigger question.

Mr. Marchese: It is, and a different one.

The other teachers have talked about the fact that the government already provides alternative programming within the system. They talked about the youth apprentice program, the supervised alternative learning programs, co-operative programs, the student success teachers that they now have added. All sorts of teachers' federations are talking about the fact that these supervised programs are taking place in the current system. Why can't we be expanding those opportunities instead of creating yet another model that potentially privatizes education to every Tom, Dick, Harry and Mary who wants to provide a program—unsupervised? We don't know who's going to be doing it, we don't know who's going to be writing the curriculum and we don't know where they're going to be. Why go that route and cause the kind of damage that you're suggesting, which I agree with, instead of strengthening what we've got? Why can't we do that?

Mr. Iachelli: What would your suggestion be, Mr. Marchese?

Mr. Marchese: My suggestion to the government is that they should never have introduced this bill. They should have scrapped it. From the beginning, I said it was wrong. I attacked them even before 2003, when they made this promise. It was a dumb promise. That's one dumb promise that they should break instead of introducing it here today. The entire teaching profession is obviously opposed to it. I'm hoping the teachers are going to organize with their federations against this government until they remove it. Carmelo agrees.

The Chair: Was there a question in that?

Mr. Marchese: Carmelo was just looking for my comment, unless he's got any—

The Chair: Mr. Iachelli, you have the last word for the morning, so the floor is yours.

Mr. Iachelli: Oh, my gosh. Well, have a good lunch.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We stand adjourned until 3:30 or the end of routine proceedings.

The committee recessed from 1141 to 1535.

ASSOCIATION DES ENSEIGNANTES
ET DES ENSEIGNANTS
FRANCO-ONTARIENS,
UNITÉ NORD-EST CATHOLIQUE

The Chair: Good afternoon. This is the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. We are here for public hearings on Bill 52, the Education Statute Law Amendment Act.

Our first deputation for this afternoon is AEFO, l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, unité nord-est catholique : Ginette Lacroix-Gosselin, présidente. Bonjour. Bienvenue. Vous avez 10 minutes pour votre présentation. Veuillez commencer avec votre nom, et bonne chance.

M^{me} Ginette Lacroix-Gosselin: Merci. Je me présente : Ginette Lacroix-Gosselin, présidente de l'AEFO-nord-est catholique pour la région qui s'étend de New Liskeard à Hearst, en passant par Timmins, Cochrane et Kapuskasing.

Mes commentaires font suite aux préoccupations soulevées ce matin par mon collègue Jean-Guy La Prairie de l'AEFO-est publique et au mémoire présenté à ce même comité en août dernier. Je traiterai des élèves à risque, ainsi que des écoles francophones comme milieu de construction identitaire.

Vous allez le retrouver dans le document que mon collègue vous avait passé ce matin en page 2.

Plus qu'un lieu d'apprentissage, l'école se veut un milieu de vie pour les élèves. C'est d'autant plus vrai dans les écoles secondaires de langue française. Ces écoles offrent aux élèves vivant en milieu minoritaire des occasions privilégiées de socialiser en français avec leurs pairs et de participer à des activités parascolaires en français. L'école est aussi un outil de construction identitaire des jeunes francophones et un instrument de lutte contre l'assimilation.

Compte tenu du fait que l'Ontario ne compte que deux établissements collégiaux de langue française—l'un à Ottawa, l'autre à Sudbury—il sera difficile d'offrir des programmes d'apprentissage équivalent à double crédit en français et dans un milieu francophone dans certaines régions de la province. Si je prends ma région à Hearst, on est desservi par le Collège Boréal, mais on n'offre qu'un choix limité de cours qui sont souvent axés vers un métier. Dans notre coin, c'est l'industrie forestière. Alors, on ne veut pas limiter les choix pour nos élèves.

L'AEFO croit néanmoins qu'il est essentiel que les programmes d'apprentissage équivalent proposés par le gouvernement ne privent pas l'élève francophone de l'environnement de langue française dont il a besoin pour s'épanouir pleinement. Quand on sort les jeunes de leur milieu scolaire, on divise les forces de ce milieu. Le jeune est privé de son milieu culturel et identitaire. Puis,

l'école à son tour est privée d'un jeune qui peut être un catalyseur.

L'AEFO recommande que les programmes d'apprentissage équivalent offerts aux élèves des écoles secondaires de langue française soient dispensés en français dans un milieu francophone pour répondre ainsi à la mission de l'école de langue française.

Cibler les élèves à risque : l'AEFO est d'avis que, pour atteindre l'objectif d'un taux de diplomation de 85 % d'ici 2010-2011, les initiatives du gouvernement en matière d'apprentissage équivalent doivent cibler de façon particulière les élèves à risque.

Certaines initiatives qui font présentement l'objet de discussion au sein du ministère de l'Éducation sont fort intéressantes. Plusieurs élèves pourraient certainement profiter d'un programme de double reconnaissance des crédits. Toutefois, selon l'AEFO, il n'est pas prouvé que cette approche augmentera le taux de diplomation. Au contraire, la majorité des recherches démontrent que ce sont les élèves qui ne sont pas à risque qui bénéficient d'initiatives de ce genre.

Or, en offrant à des élèves qui sont déjà en mesure de compléter leur DÉSO de façon traditionnelle la possibilité d'obtenir des crédits ailleurs qu'à l'école secondaire qu'ils fréquentent, on risque de mettre en jeu la viabilité même de certains programmes offerts par l'école. De plus, ces élèves pourraient plus difficilement participer à la vie scolaire, ce qui aurait un impact sur leur épanouissement personnel et sur le développement de leur identité comme francophones. La gamme des activités parascolaires offertes à l'école pourrait aussi s'en trouver réduite.

Il faut également prévoir que les élèves à risque qui suivraient des cours d'apprentissage équivalent puissent continuer de recevoir les services auxquels ils ont droit en vertu de la Loi sur l'éducation. Ainsi, plusieurs élèves à risque font l'objet de programmes d'études individualisés—les PEI—lesquels sont gérés par des enseignantes et des enseignants qualifiés. Les élèves à risque qui suivraient des cours d'apprentissage équivalent à l'extérieur de l'école doivent pouvoir continuer à bénéficier de l'encadrement et des accommodements prévus dans leur PEI.

L'AEFO est d'avis que les démarches entreprises pour adapter les programmes d'études actuels aux besoins de groupes particuliers d'élèves peuvent réduire le taux de décrochage et ainsi augmenter le taux de diplomation. À titre d'exemple, je vous cite le développement de cours à l'échelon local et la révision du programme d'études de mathématiques appliquées en neuvième année. Les résultats des tests standardisés de mathématiques de neuvième année de l'an dernier révèlent une augmentation encourageante du taux de réussite des élèves des cours appliqués. Alors, il faudrait peut-être modifier ce qui existe déjà puisque ça fonctionne.

L'AEFO recommande donc que les programmes d'apprentissage équivalent proposés dans le projet de loi 52 soient conçus pour cibler spécifiquement les élèves à risque.

L'AEFO recommande que les élèves à risque qui participent à un programme d'apprentissage équivalent continuent de recevoir l'ensemble des services auxquels ils ont droit en vertu de la Loi sur l'éducation.

L'AEFO recommande que le gouvernement consulte les enseignantes et les enseignants des écoles secondaires de langue française pour identifier les moyens appropriés d'augmenter le taux de diplomation des élèves qui fréquentent ces écoles.

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L'AEFO recommande aussi qu'on consacre des ressources supplémentaires pour accélérer la révision des programmes d'études actuels et pour rédiger des cours à l'échelon local et de nouveaux cours conçus spécifiquement pour les élèves francophones.

Ça m'amène maintenant à la partie sur les conséquences financières aux pages 5 et 6 de votre document.

On ne connaît pas pour l'instant les coûts associés à l'apprentissage équivalent, mais l'AEFO a des inquiétudes à cet égard.

À l'heure actuelle, le gouvernement verse aux conseils scolaires plus de 1 000 \$ pour chaque crédit-élève au secondaire. Qu'arrivera-t-il à ces sommes si l'élève complète plusieurs crédits à l'extérieur de son école secondaire?

Si le gouvernement n'assure pas que ces sommes restent aux conseils scolaires, ceux-ci se verront privés de millions de dollars et l'ensemble de la population étudiante en subira les conséquences. La situation des écoles de langue française est d'autant plus fragile que l'enseignement y coûte plus cher et que le gouvernement actuel vient tout juste de commencer à corriger les iniquités du passé en matière de financement de l'éducation en français. Nous craignons donc un recul en matière de financement de nos écoles.

Il faut également prévoir que les familles d'élèves qui suivront des cours d'apprentissage équivalent auront à débours des sommes supplémentaires, que ce soit pour les frais de déplacement chez l'employeur, à l'établissement postsecondaire, ou pour du matériel scolaire. Les établissements postsecondaires francophones et les employeurs francophones étant peu nombreux, en particulier dans certaines régions de la province, comme le nord de l'Ontario chez nous, les distances à parcourir seront plus grandes et les dépenses engagées le seront également.

En conclusion, l'AEFO est d'avis que le projet de loi 52 pourrait corriger certaines des lacunes actuelles de notre système d'éducation, notamment en offrant davantage d'options aux élèves qui risquent de quitter l'école sans avoir obtenu leur diplôme d'études secondaires.

L'AEFO croit toutefois que les initiatives reliées à l'apprentissage équivalent peuvent être mises en oeuvre sans modifier la Loi sur l'éducation, exception faite des modalités portant l'âge d'apprentissage obligatoire à 18 ans et celles modifiant d'autres lois pour le permis de conduire.

Ceci étant dit, que le gouvernement procède avec des initiatives reliées à l'apprentissage équivalent avec ou

sans projet de loi, nos préoccupations et nos recommandations demeurent les mêmes.

L'AEFO est d'avis que les initiatives proposées en matière d'apprentissage équivalent doivent viser de manière spécifique les élèves à risque pour ainsi augmenter le taux de diplomation sans drainer l'effectif des écoles secondaires.

Vous avez à la fin les huit recommandations que propose l'AEFO dans ce mémoire, celles qui ont été présentées aujourd'hui et qui s'ajoutent à celles déposées en août dernier.

Merci de l'attention que vous m'avez accordée.

The Chair: Merci beaucoup. Vous avez utilisé vos 10 minutes. Il n'y aura aucun temps pour les questions. Merci beaucoup pour votre présentation cet après-midi.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

CONSEIL DE L'ORDRE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS DE L'ONTARIO

The Chair: Our next deputation will be the Ontario College of Teachers. Marilyn Laframboise and Brian McGowan, welcome this afternoon. You have 10 minutes for your deputation. If there is any time remaining, it will go to the parties in rotation for a question to you. Please begin by stating your names for Hansard and then proceed.

M^{me} Marilyn Laframboise: Je m'appelle Marilyn Laframboise. Je suis enseignante, et présidente du conseil de l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario, l'organisme de réglementation de la profession enseignante de la province.

Le registraire et chef de la direction de l'ordre, Brian McGowan, m'accompagne aujourd'hui.

Je vous remercie de me donner l'occasion de vous parler des modifications proposées au projet de loi 52. Je vais vous exposer brièvement nos idées sur le projet de loi et la façon dont il touche aux attentes des élèves, des parents et du public en ce qui concerne la profession enseignante en Ontario.

Avec ses quelque 204 000 membres, l'ordre est l'organisme d'autoréglementation le plus important au Canada. La loi sur l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario, les règlements y afférents et les règlements administratifs de l'ordre décrivent ses domaines d'autorité et ses devoirs.

En vertu de la loi, nous avons l'obligation d'inscrire et de certifier les enseignantes et les enseignants et de traiter les questions de conduite professionnelle, de compétence et d'aptitude professionnelle de nos membres.

Nous avons également le devoir de veiller à ce que les enseignantes et enseignants respectent des normes d'exercice et de déontologie élevées avant même qu'ils n'entrent dans les classes et tout au long de leur carrière.

Through our regulation of the profession, we ensure that students receive instruction from qualified, certified

and competent teachers. It's precisely because of this mandate that we are here before you this afternoon.

Let us be clear: The college supports the general principles and objectives of Bill 52. We welcome initiatives that contribute to the success of all students.

Teachers, our members, know very well that conventional educational settings and curriculum do not work for all learners. That's why college members across the province work in alternative settings to help students overcome a wide range of learning challenges. Bill 52, as it is currently written, does not deal adequately with the issues of accountability and responsibility for educational programming.

The bill, which amends the Education Act and the Highway Traffic Act, hopes to raise the compulsory school attendance age from 16 to 18, or until graduation, by keeping students learning in classrooms or in approved out-of-school programs, including apprenticeships or co-operative education. These opportunities would fall outside the instruction otherwise provided by a school board and are described in the bill as equivalent learning.

The bill defines "equivalent learning" as a learning situation that falls outside the instruction traditionally provided by a board and for which a pupil's success can be reasonably evaluated, including but not limited to programs, courses of study or other activities offered by colleges, universities not governed by the act, community groups or through apprenticeships or job training. Students would be allowed to claim course credits for time spent in these equivalent learning situations.

The "including, but not limited to" phrase suggests that activities could be provided by people who are not college members. We believe that equivalent learning opportunities must be supervised by college members with specialized knowledge who are subject to our disciplinary oversight.

The college's obligation to the public generally, and to parents and students in particular, is to ensure that publicly funded education in this province is delivered by qualified, certified teachers. Otherwise, the college's mandate to protect the public interest is severely undermined. The bill refers only to "educator," without defining the term. Does that mean a certified teacher who is a college member? We think it must. A teacher, as defined by the Education Act, means a member of the Ontario College of Teachers.

The bill does not explicitly set out who may qualify as equivalent learning providers, how they will be chosen, monitored or assessed. It doesn't say how equivalent learning programs will be developed or assessed, nor does it say how or who will evaluate students. Important and substantive details are left for regulations not yet written to define. Further, we wonder what chance the college and other education stakeholders will have to comment on the content of the regulations as they affect the teaching profession.

Currently, the college requires the following from its members:

- that all applicants undergo criminal record checks;
- that out-of-province applicants have clean teaching records in other jurisdictions;
- that applicants be able to speak, read and write fluently in English or French; and
- that our members meet standards of practice and ethical standards.

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By law, the college keeps a public register of our members. Parents and employers can check the teaching qualifications and status of our 204,000 members at any time by visiting our website.

Finally, the college investigates and resolves complaints of professional misconduct, incompetence and incapacity against our members. We hold public hearings whenever warranted and publish decisions on our website and in our quarterly magazine. This is true public accountability.

Parents and students have the right to expect that teachers who are licensed to teach have the knowledge and qualifications to do so. They have the right to expect that teachers have completed pre-service teacher education programs. We do not believe it is in the public interest for students of any age to be placed in a position where they are subject to the authority of individuals who are not themselves accountable to a professional regulator.

The Chair: Just to let you know, you have a little less than two minutes to go.

Ms. Laframboise: Thank you. In closing, we submit that Bill 52 must be amended. The Ontario College of Teachers takes its legislated mandate to protect the public interest seriously. In our nine and a half years, we have licensed close to 100,000 teachers. We have approved ethical standards and standards of practice for the teaching profession. We have adopted a rigorous investigation and hearing process, and we have undertaken the accreditation of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.

The public has come to expect that Ontario's children will be taught by teachers who are accountable to their regulatory body for their professional practice. Anything less is not in the public interest.

We would be pleased to offer further comment, advice and support to the government as it proceeds. We're happy to answer any of your questions, should we have a few moments remaining.

The Chair: You timed it almost to the second. We thank you very much for your deputation and for your time in coming in today.

ONTARIO ENGLISH CATHOLIC TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION, TORONTO

The Chair: The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, Toronto—Donna Marie Kennedy and Jeff Heximer. Welcome, or perhaps welcome back. If you remember from our last iteration, you have 10 minutes for your deputation. If there is any time, it will go to the

parties in rotation for a question. Please begin by stating your names for Hansard and then proceed.

Ms. Donna Marie Kennedy: Thank you very much. I'm Donna Marie Kennedy, president of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, and on my left is Jeff Heximer, who's one of our staff officers. First of all, thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to present today on Bill 52. You have a document that will be distributed to you on the regulatory framework for secondary school credits. As you know, from our perspective, as we've said before, we have some concerns about quality control and quality assurance with the present wording of Bill 52.

Ontario grants a single provincial secondary school graduation diploma, the OSSD. The commonality of this diploma provides assurances to employers, to post-secondary institutions, that students have completed a rigorous form of study in our secondary schools. It establishes a reliable and predictable standard by which all Ontarians can measure the education that graduates have received. The courses that our students take cover a variety of programs—we have outlined them there for you—and there have been provincial standards that have been recognized at the local level as well, where locally developed courses are offered so that individual students are meeting needs according to their own local community. If some of these requirements are replaced, in some cases the provincial standards established by the OSSD will become less reliable and consequently less valuable. If the OSSD becomes a locally awarded diploma, it will lose its credibility as a provincial standard.

Currently, there are many aspects that allow for equivalent learning contained in the Ontario secondary school curriculum documents. There are locally developed courses; there's co-op ed; independent study; supervised equivalent learning is currently being provided; and recognition for out-of-school learning, according to provincially defined standards. These maintain the integrity of the system. Ontario currently has a policy called prior learning assessment and recognition, PLAR, for secondary school students and adult learners, and this too can be used in schools to recognize prior learning outside of the school system. So we have those things already in place, and we believe the external credits are already recognized through this particular process.

Currently, publicly funded secondary schools and inspected private schools are authorized to grant credits, the OSSD and secondary school transcripts. Credits are granted exclusively by the secondary school principal, a member of the college of teachers. He or she is accountable to the school board and to the Minister of Education. The standards of evaluation for secondary school courses are set by Ontario's Ministry of Education assessment and evaluation policies. As it stands, Bill 52's provisions could weaken the quality control and universality of the education system, which protects the integrity of secondary school credit accumulation.

As mentioned by the previous speakers, teachers in our schools are responsible to the Ontario College of

Teachers. Almost 10 years ago, as the first chair of the Ontario College of Teachers, I made a deputation on the importance of having qualified individuals delivering programs to the students in our province. That holds today, as it did 10 years ago. It's incredibly important that members of the college deliver secondary school credits.

You'll see from the chart in 3.06, the impact of Bill 52 on secondary school course delivery, that there are no oversight provisions for the extended credits or equivalent learning, and we have grave concerns about that. The college of teachers does regulate the profession and it does regulate the members of the college, so we would ask you to carefully look at that.

Secondary school principals have exclusive authority to grant equivalent learning credits, and that is what we see as being the proper way to deal with these extended credits. If the Ministry of Education believes the Ontario curriculum is too narrow to meet the needs of all students, the current review of the policy documents should be used to encourage principals to approve locally developed equivalent course offerings to serve specific communities.

In conclusion, the problem with replacing regulated curriculum and course expectations with unsupervised, unregulated equivalent learning is the loss of integrity for the OSSD. No one in Ontario wants graduation rates to climb because expectations have been lowered. Similarly, no employer or educator believes that cheap labour and ad hoc courses will produce the skilled workers that Ontario needs to maintain a competitive edge.

Ontarians expect and demand bona fide course development and implementation consistent with the current regulatory framework. It will take bona fide course development to help schools support students who are fundamentally challenged by the standards set by the OSSD.

OECTA believes that Bill 52 is unnecessary and that its goals can be achieved by reforming the basic curriculum documents which provide the basis for granting credits in Ontario secondary schools. Therefore, our recommendations are:

- that the provisions for equivalent learning contained in Bill 52 are unnecessary and should be removed;

- that secondary school principals continue to be responsible for evaluating courses of study and ensuring that courses taught are consistent with the Ontario curriculum;

- that secondary school principals continue to have exclusive authority to grant prior learning assessment and recognition credits to students enrolled at their school; and

- that student learning for credit purposes be assessed by teachers exclusively.

The Chair: Thank you. This will be our first opportunity for questions this afternoon. It's the turn of the government side.

Mr. McMeekin: Thanks very much for the presentation. I caught your phrase about there being some

need for some work with the wording. I think you're right: I think we do need to work with some of the wording, and we are trying to do some of that, as you know.

Just in that context, the minister made some comments today about dual credits and equivalent learning, and she was very clear that the only people who would be granting credits would be the actual school boards and the ministry itself. Her sense is that anything beyond that would clearly be reflective of some sort of move toward privatization, and that's not what this bill is about. I just want to state that.

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In terms of words, words are important. I wanted to share those words with you and invite you, as best we can find a way to do it, to continue to collaborate so that the roughly 45,000 students who choose to leave can somehow be retained. It's our belief that we can do a significant job there. That will require investment in a considerable number of additional teachers with the links to the system, particularly in the context you've outlined. I offer that up. You're invited to comment on that if you wish, but I wanted you to hear those words as well.

Ms. Kennedy: Thank you. First of all, we are in full support of the learning to 18 initiatives, but we do believe that qualified teachers are required. So thank you for that.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your time this afternoon.

KEVIN GRAHAM

The Chair: The District School Board of Niagara, Don Reilly Resource Centre, Kevin Graham. Good afternoon and welcome. You'll have 10 minutes for your deputation. If you leave any time remaining, it will go to the parties in rotation. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then proceed.

Mr. Kevin Graham: My name is Kevin Graham. I am a technology consultant for the District School Board of Niagara. It's great to be back at Queen's Park. I was here 30 years ago on a job interview for a carpenter, so it's nice to be back.

I must first thank you for this tremendous opportunity to present a few of my views to you this afternoon. You'll not hear from a great orator today, as you have already; you will not hear from a person with an exceptional command of the Queen's English, but you will hear a compassionate plea from a carpenter, a teacher and a father.

I've been extremely fortunate to be on the ground floor of many of this government's exciting new initiatives. The District School Board of Niagara has developed an elementary technology centre for grades 7 and 8, housed in a secondary school, where elementary and secondary school teachers can work together to make for a smooth transition to high school.

With the increased emphasis on experiential learning, the District School Board of Niagara has watched as our students' participation in the Ontario youth apprenticeship program soared to over 400 signing their appren-

ticeship registrations while still in high school and starting down their journey into the skilled trades.

The District School Board of Niagara has received funding as part of the rural Lighthouse projects: one in viticulture, the other in the construction sector. Both have been extremely successful. In fact, just before I came here today I stopped at a job site in Beamsville that is building a new home and watched 22 young students sign their apprenticeships with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and start their life in a skilled trade—a day that I'll never forget when I signed my apprenticeship papers, and I know they'll feel the same way tonight when they go home.

The District School Board of Niagara has been fortunate to be a pilot in the specialist high skills major in construction as well. The former Minister of Education, Sandra Pupatello, kicked off this event in Niagara this September with our newest partner, Phelps Homes. Our second phase of the District School Board of Niagara's specialist high skills major will begin in January, where DSNB technology students will participate with Habitat for Humanity on our third build. Over the past three years, we have seen nearly 1,000 students participate in these builds. This year, the students involved will receive industry-recognized certification, as well as courses in math and English which have been contextualized to meet the needs of the construction sector.

In the 20 years that I've been teaching, in the 20 years that I've been in technological education, this is the most exciting program I have seen for our students. I want to thank the government for that.

The former Minister of Education also stated at our specialist high skills major kickoff that this government has delivered over \$53 million into technological education. She stated that more than 300,000 students benefited from over 200 new technology education courses and that over 500 new units were added to technological education courses across this province. This government's position to enhance opportunities for young people in the skilled trades is truly inspiring.

Along with these new initiatives, this government now wants to pass Bill 52, which would give secondary school students the ability to take college courses while still in high school, for which they would receive both college and secondary school credits, called dual credits—two simple words that, in my opinion, have the potential to undermine everything great this government has done for students enrolled in technological education. The same government that has reduced the early-leaver rate from 29% to 25%, giving thousands of kids the opportunity to reach their dreams, now wants to be able to send secondary school students to college institutions that have a dropout rate of 42% in the first six weeks, according to the Alan King report.

For this government to launch a plan that would take students out of a secondary school setting with safety nets in place, with qualified technology teachers who are also skilled tradespeople, teaching them not only the skills of their craft but acting as mentors, trainers and

educators, while being able to meet each and every student's specific learning and education need because of the formal training they have already had at faculties of education across this province, is short-sighted at best. Technological education is offered in over 700 secondary schools across the province, delivered by qualified technology teachers. Suddenly, 24 colleges are able to deliver the same program in the same way, meeting the needs of young adolescents? I would think that's highly unlikely. How will students in remote communities, without a community college presence, have the same opportunities that might be available in urban centres like here in Toronto? The very initiatives that have set this government apart from previous governments have all been about student success, yet this initiative regarding dual credits has the potential to devastate technological education and the beginnings of apprenticeship training that is fostered in our students.

Dual credits, at first glance, appear to be helpful and innovative but in the long term will prove to be devastating to students in the next few years—devastating to secondary school technological education, devastating to the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, devastating to boards like the District School Board of Niagara that are undergoing declining enrolment and devastating to the potential number of young people wanting to pursue opportunities in the skilled trades in Ontario. Devastating.

As dual credit opportunities expand, and they will, you will see technological education numbers decrease, as they will, making it impossible for schools to run specific classes. As senior classes are eroded, and they will be, interest in these classes will dwindle. The very classes that have been the support and feeders to the Ontario youth apprenticeship program, the specialist high skills major programs and the Lighthouse programs will no longer be a viable option for secondary students. This is when you will see the number of students registering for apprenticeships decline, the interest in the high skills major decline, the Lighthouse projects decline and the knowledge and understanding of the skilled trades vanish, leaving Ontario in an even greater crisis in the area of the skilled trades.

If I have not convinced you that dual credits will be harmful to the long-term opportunities for our students—and I know you've heard many speakers before me and you'll hear many speakers after me—and you can honestly say you believe in dual credits and your opinion has not been changed, then please look at making it a two-way street: Please consider giving high schools across the province the chance to deliver college credits in a secondary school setting; the opportunity to reinstate, which we had many years ago, in many cases, the ability of secondary schools to deliver part one of apprenticeship training.

For the sake of our students, for the health of technological education in Ontario, for the further development of the skilled trades in Ontario, please rethink your intention to implement dual credits. Please take a

moment and think of the impact this will have on school boards like the District School Board of Niagara that are in the midst of declining enrolment. Please take a moment and think of the thousands of students who may never experience the opportunity to develop the skills required for today's workplace.

The Chair: Just to advise you, you have about a minute left.

Mr. Graham: They need a community college to experience technological education.

As a close colleague of mine, who is the dean of technology at a community college, often states, the strengths of the community college technology programs are directly tied to the experience that their students have while in a high school technology program. These students arrive at the college much better prepared to be successful in the college programs as a result of their high school experience. Dual credits have the potential to greatly harm secondary technological education programs, and for this reason I would strongly urge you to reconsider this initiative. Please take a moment and think of the consequences of the dual credits.

The Chair: Almost to the second. Thank you very much for your deputation this afternoon.

1610

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

The Chair: Our next deputation will be the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, Michele McNabb and Lee Gowers. Good afternoon. You'll have 10 minutes for your remarks. If you leave any time remaining, it will go to the parties in rotation. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then proceed.

Ms. Michele McNabb: Good afternoon. I'm Michele McNabb, and I'm currently serving as the first vice-president of OFHSA and represent our organization on the learning to 18 working table. Sitting beside me is Lee Gowers, our policy chairperson and past president of the Hamilton-Wentworth Council of Home and School Associations.

About OFHSA, the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations: We're a provincial, parent-based organization established in 1916, with presently over 7,000 members. Our mandate, beliefs and policies are determined by our members. We meet annually to review our actions and select new initiatives for policies as proposed by those members. As an incorporated body, our board of directors and executive committee meet several times during the year. We're a grassroots group: Our association units are established in the schools, with parent members working to support and adhere to our constitution and bylaws.

Provincially, we are invited to participate on many Ministry of Education committees and working tables, and have been recognized over the years as one of three official parent groups in public education. We have

representation on the partnership table and were involved in the recent Parent Voice in Education project. We have forged alliances with our trustee association (OPSBA), the teacher federations, the Ontario College of Teachers, EQAO, Ontario Principals' Council, Ontario Public Supervisory Officers' Association (OPSOA), Ontario School Bus Association and other education partners. Our volunteer parent members are involved in the local school, school board and provincial levels.

In our review of the proposed Bill 52, we note several items:

- (1) We do not want to see the OSSD (Ontario secondary school diploma) devalued;
- (2) Proposed programs should be geared towards at-risk students;
- (3) Qualifications of instructors are crucial;
- (4) Support, common standards and monitoring must be the responsibility of the Ministry of Education;
- (5) Funding for new initiatives must be adequate; and
- (6) Non-support of linking drivers' licences to school attendance.

To expand further:

(1) We do not want to see the OSSD devalued: A positive learning environment, compulsory courses and a social environment are important components of student life in secondary school. Enriched experiences in a supervised setting help them develop into mature, responsible citizens. We currently expect students to achieve a certain standard, and we need to maintain that, offering the best for each student.

The community of a school is varied and offers students opportunities to explore their talents, skills and desires. We would hope that this very fabric of school life will be continued and not negatively impacted by outside programs.

(2) Proposed programs should be geared towards at-risk students: That being said, we would recognize that our current school structure does not benefit all students, and we would encourage that any new learning opportunities be targeted primarily to at-risk students, who might be most needy. We should consider student needs, wants, the school and community resources in providing engaging, positive programs. Programs must be credible and prepare students for transition into the adult world, while realistically providing the core curriculum required for an OSSD.

(3) Qualifications of instructors are crucial. To us, the qualifications of instructors and organizations are crucial to ensure the integrity of any program. OFHSA has repeatedly advocated for certified and qualified teachers for our students, with evaluating and reporting mechanisms in place.

Personal and workplace safety is essential, and a clear course plan must be provided before allowing students to enroll. While co-op and apprenticeship programs are administered through the schools and required to provide these safeguards, we would expect no less from any other provider.

(4) Support, common standards and monitoring: In order to offer equitable opportunity to our students, we would strongly encourage the Ministry of Education to set common standards, including monitoring of programs, while still allowing local school boards to determine their programs. Mandatory reporting of programs should be required for all school boards.

(5) Financial funding and support from the Ministry of Education is needed to encourage school boards to research and establish new initiatives for their at-risk student population. There is also a concern that funding dollars may be diverted from school boards and ultimately force schools to offer less program choice for the students in their traditional school setting.

(6) We do not support a proposal that would deny or suspend a driver's licence to out-of-school youth. We feel this is a counterproductive and punitive action that could be challenged in the law courts under the Charter of Rights legislation. As well, increasing fines for parents and employers who violate the "school until 18" regulation is considered unproductive and largely unenforceable.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our views regarding this piece of legislation. While we applaud the intent of the bill—promoting education and success for all students—we would have preferred to see a better definition of education delivery in today's world, with full disclosure of criteria, standards and accountability in the legislation.

The Chair: Thank you. Our rotation moves to Mr. Klees.

Mr. Klees: Thank you for your presentation. We have been saying from the day that this bill was introduced that no one can argue with the stated intent of the bill. There wouldn't be anyone in this province, I think, who would argue with wanting to ensure that young people stay in school, that they graduate and have the best education possible.

We've also said, from the very first day that we read this bill that it is so fundamentally flawed, that on the one hand we have the punitive measures of stripping these licences for students who drop out, to this very unnecessary aspect of the bill that submitter after submitter—we've heard from teachers and students. There hasn't been a stakeholder who's come forward who hasn't affirmed that all of the things that are intended with regard to equivalent learning are being done now. Wonderful programs.

And by the way, the framework for all of that was introduced in this province in 1999. All of those equivalent programs that have been referred to time and again throughout submissions refer to that framework that was put in place in 1999.

Would you agree that this bill really does undermine that framework by allowing for a watering down of standards? You mentioned that standards are very important and should be province-wide, and that what's really missing is the appropriate funding and resources so that the proven programs that are already working well could

in fact be expanded and strengthened throughout the province.

Ms. McNabb: Yes, I think we could agree in principle on that. In working with the learning to 18 working table, a lot of the comments that came from this varied group were so positively pushed towards the student, and the at-risk student, understanding that “at risk” can sometimes be a student who is doing okay academically but may not have the interest or may not be able to have the opportunities.

1620

Our provincial organization sees a lot of disparity in cities, urban and rural. A lot of the opportunities we have for children are not implemented because the school boards, frankly, don't have the money. But, as you say, the intent of the bill is to keep our children understanding that their educational successes, their success in life, is what we do strongly support.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That concludes the time that we'll have for you.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 22

The Chair: Our next deputant will be OSSTF, District 22: Daniel Peat. Good afternoon. If you've been here a little while, you've gathered the ground rules. You have 10 minutes for your deputation. If you leave any time remaining, it will go to the parties in rotation. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and proceed.

Mr. Daniel Peat: Thank you very much. My name is Daniel Peat. I want to, first of all, thank you for the opportunity to present to the committee and to let you know that I represent approximately 1,300 teachers and occasional teachers in the District School Board of Niagara. That's an area that extends from Grimsby to Niagara-on-the-Lake to Fort Erie to Port Colborne.

My colleague Kevin Graham made the presentation just before the home and school association. He's the consultant for the District School Board of Niagara in technological education. He brought to your attention several existing technological education programs which already addressed the needs of students who might otherwise drop out of school before 18 and do it without the use of Bill 52. These include the Ontario youth apprenticeship program and partnerships involving the local Habitat for Humanity and a local builder. These are extraordinary programs, and you should take any opportunity you can to have a look at some of these programs in the board. They go well beyond the stated objective of keeping students in school till 18. They give students a head start on apprenticeships, they give them contact with future employers in our communities and they expose them to an ethic of volunteerism. They've been so successful because they engage our students. That process begins with a strong science and technology curriculum in our elementary schools, culminating with regular classes in our design and technology centres in grades 7 and 8, then followed, in secondary school, by

guaranteed access to a wide variety of technological programs in each of our families of schools.

The key to the success of our students is twofold. Firstly, the teachers of secondary school technological education programs are all both experienced tradespeople and trained educators who are sensitive to the learning needs of adolescents. Secondly, these programs have had support by the DSBN beyond the provisions of the funding formula and the strong support of our local communities.

However, commitment to the success of adolescent learners is not limited to innovation in technological education. We have also developed programs that meet the diverse needs of other adolescent learners and lead them to brighter futures.

The college link program is an example. This program operates under the auspices of Welland Centennial Secondary School. The school is a short walk from the Welland campus of Niagara College. For several years, since before the formation of the district school board, this program has offered an opportunity for students who have not had success in our secondary schools in the Welland area to complete their secondary school education and be given a pathway for admission to Niagara College.

It is essentially a one-room schoolhouse which has been located in a number of locations in Welland, but most often on the Niagara College campus. Students who complete the credits required for graduation are automatically given an opportunity to study at Niagara College. This program has enabled hundreds of students who might otherwise have never finished high school to go on to college. It has been so successful because of the small class size and the close cooperation between the secondary school teacher and members of the college staff, which provides transitional support to the students in the program. We are very proud of this program, and it has benefited students in our community without any of the dual credits proposed in Bill 52.

A similar program is being set up this year at the Niagara College campus serving St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake but with the provision of dual credit to be given for college courses taken two days a week.

We have several concerns regarding these dual credits. Offering a full OSSD credit for a much shorter college course is a threat to the integrity of the OSSD. Secondly, any introduction of dual credits will cause a shift of students from our secondary schools. If any commodity is offered on a two-for-one basis, buyers will choose that source rather than the source where it's offered at full price. Offering dual credits is an innovation which would cause students to leave the secondary schools, where there are more supports for learning, for the college system, where there are fewer supports and, accordingly, there is far less chance for student success. Thirdly, schools in most parts of Ontario, particularly in Niagara, are facing significant pressures due to declining enrolment. Anything that takes students out of our secondary schools could tip the balance towards the closing of the secondary school in many of our communities. The

introduction of dual credits would be the death knell for secondary schools in many Niagara communities.

Another program is the rural schools' agricultural or viticulture Lighthouse program, combined with what we call our Leaver Retriever program. The funding of this pilot project is from the Ministry of Education. It has allowed us to expand our co-operative education programs into various agricultural industries in Niagara. It's targeted to address the needs of rural students to learn from the leading innovators in agriculture, including Niagara's wine industry. We'd like to expand this program to other industries in Niagara, including the hospitality industry.

Many students in this program have come back to school through a Leaver Retriever program which is run by a youth worker acting as a back-to-school coordinator. After a semester or two out of school they realize that the door is closed to them without a high school education. Again, the success of this program lies in its link to the community, the skills of a professional youth counsellor and the supervision of a co-operative education teacher. Secondary school co-operative education teachers are trained to make the required links between the curriculum and the community.

We also have alternative education programs called Success and Bridge. For many years now they have served students who have difficulty in our mainstream schools. There are now two such programs available to every family of schools in Niagara.

The Bridge program is tailored to students leaving elementary school. Students who are identified as being at high risk of not succeeding in secondary school are taught in a self-contained environment by an elementary teacher and a secondary teacher with the support of a trained child care worker.

The Success program assists older students, where they are taught by a secondary school teacher, with regular visits by a youth counsellor. Hundreds of students have been able to graduate from secondary school and become productive members of our communities with the assistance of these programs. They have succeeded because of the support of the DSNB beyond the funding formula, which allows the right combination of professionals to work together in a team. There are no dual credits required and there have been no threats of not being able to get your driver's licence to help these students at risk. The emphasis is to help students to succeed must be positive and not negative.

The Chair: Just to advise, you have a little less than two minutes.

Mr. Peat: Thank you. I've given examples of a number of programs which address the needs of our most at-risk students, those at risk of not graduating or of leaving school before they have the tools they need for a career. I hope that you will realize that the introduction of dual credits is opening a door which amounts to the door to voucher education. It could really damage the community schools in Niagara.

The Chair: Thank you. Mr. Tabuns, can you make the question a short one?

Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth): Sure. I gather that you folks don't support this bill, or don't support it without dramatic rewriting. Is that a fair summary?

Mr. Peat: I would say that's a fair summary. We don't support this bill. We find it unnecessary and a diversion of attention, and probably funding, away from the real needs of the system.

Mr. Tabuns: Thank you. Do I have any time left?

The Chair: If it's another short one.

Mr. Tabuns: My brother's a teacher in the Hamilton-Wentworth system. I told him about this bill and he went crazy, not about the dual certificate business but because of the idea that kids would be forced to stay in a class when they'd given up. He said, "I already deal with students who are totally disruptive, and the thought of imprisoning them in my class makes me go up the wall." Is that a perspective shared by other teachers?

Mr. Peat: That's a valid perspective; it's a perspective shared with me by a trustee yesterday evening. The answer is to create programs that are innovative and attractive to them and serve their needs, not force them under threat of not getting their driver's licence to stay in a classroom.

The Chair: And at that point, thank you very much for your time, for coming in today.

1630

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION

The Chair: Our next deputation will be OSSTF Rainbow District 3, Rhonda Kimberley-Young and Ken Coran. Good afternoon and thanks for joining us this afternoon.

Ms. Rhonda Kimberley-Young: Mike Page, one of our locals in District 3, was unable to be here today. I am here in his stead. I am also the president of OSSTF provincially. To my left is Ken Coran, who is the vice-president of OSSTF. I hail from Upper Canada and Ken from Thames Valley. But I think today, rather than speak primarily about the innovative programs that might be there in our own districts, from our own home towns, we want to speak in a broader context about the bill.

I think it's also information that might be—

The Chair: Just before you get going, could you just please introduce yourself for the purposes of Hansard. You'll have 10 minutes for your deputation. If you leave any time remaining, it will go to the parties in rotation.

Ms. Kimberley-Young: Thank you very much. My name is Rhonda Kimberley-Young; my colleague is Ken Coran, for Hansard purposes.

Earlier today, Ken and I were at the OTF executive meeting and in fact earlier today the OTF executive met with Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education. While I'm not here to speak officially on behalf of OTF, as I am not their president, certainly I can share with you that the OTF executive today passed an addendum to their earlier submission on Bill 52 and we made Minister Wynne aware of that today. It does in fact call for withdrawal of

the bill, because it is unnecessary to meet the objectives as set out in the legislation.

I'd also like to be very clear about the process since this bill was first introduced, because I think there is some misunderstanding. While the bill was introduced some time ago, we have repeatedly asked the minister and the minister's staff over that period of time—a succession of three ministers—what was in fact intended by this government through equivalent credits, dual credits or external credits. We were provided no answers, but reassurances that many of the concerns that we were expressing would be addressed through the course of the legislation and debate.

The Liberal government has set up many consultation mechanisms, a learning to age 18 table. There is in fact a subgroup of the learning to age 18 table on dual and external credits. It has never met. This issue was only raised once and very recently at a venue called the Student Success Commission, and the earliest proposals, that we happen to be aware of because we sit there, were certainly not proposals which we believe are of value to meeting the objectives of the legislation.

So I want to be clear: From our view, this is not an issue of the policy and its implementation. This is an issue of legislation is enabling credits to be delivered by non-certified, non-qualified instructors outside the school setting. OSSTF supports learning to age 18; in fact, we set up a student success proposal many years ago, and that was a component of it. We want to work constructively with the Ministry of Education, with the school boards, with the skilled trades sector, and with other partners in education to ensure a broad range of learning opportunities for all Ontario students. We want our students to succeed in achieving a secondary school diploma, so it will open doors for them—doors to the world of work, to apprenticeships and other post-secondary education. But we also want to ensure that the diploma they earn has value.

Ontario's diploma is widely respected, in Ontario and outside the province, and I think critics of this legislation could quite easily contend that what it will in fact do is water down the requirements of the secondary diploma. It's because of those strong beliefs that we have concerns about Bill 52. I think you've heard many times the concerns around the requirements around the driver's licence. We think that is an unproven means to keep students in school and is something that will be applied very inequitably, particularly between rural and urban students, but in other ways as well.

The primary concerns we have, however, are around the dual and external credits and it is now clear—we have made an earlier submission, but the more we have researched and investigated the pilot projects and other things that are happening around the province, we believe there are, frankly, no amendments to the bill which would adequately prevent the harm caused by the widespread introduction of dual or external credits by unspecified and unlimited providers.

We believe there are already equivalent learning opportunities available through district school boards

supervised or taught by certified teachers. In fact, this year there are over 1,500 of these credits being successfully offered through innovative pilot projects involving certified teachers. We believe the bill is absolutely not necessary because of the provisions that already exist in the Education Act, because of the provisions and latitude that already exist within the OSS curriculum and because of PLA, prior learning assessment.

We would argue that Ontario students deserve better than to receive their secondary school credits from un-certified personnel who have no formal teacher training, no experience in teaching adolescents and who are not screened through a criminal background check procedure. Such providers would not be required to abide by the professional and ethical standards established by the Ontario College of Teachers and they would not be subject to the teacher performance appraisal process.

Bill 52 contains no standards for a program or courses to be offered as dual or external credits. Reference is made only to guidelines to be developed under the powers of the minister to direct boards to create policies and procedures.

There are no details on critical issues such as the nature of the providers of external credits or the screening process for the providers. There is no mention of reviewing course content and no avenue for course consistency. There is no definition of the length of the courses or the rigour of the content. There is no provision to monitor student attendance or for the replacement of absent personnel. Some providers are already advertising credits for 45 hours without an exam, as opposed to the 110 hours required for a secondary school credit.

All of these point to the fact that this legislation is unnecessary, and instead of meeting the objective of helping students at risk, in fact opens up doors to greater harm. There is no provision through this bill for the professional support services like guidance, educational assistants or professional student support personnel that at-risk students need.

We believe that the dual and external credits may call into question the established reputation of the Ontario secondary school diploma. Providing additional credit opportunities to all students may well lead to already successful secondary students fast-tracking into college or university rather than assisting those students who are more likely to drop out with innovative programs. This is the opposite of the intent of the legislation and it may in fact lead to our vulnerable students becoming even more vulnerable.

We applaud the intent of the legislation to make more students successful at high school, to broaden the range of opportunities, but the legislation is not the necessary tool to do it and in fact may open a whole range of problems and complications that, in the end, defeat the very purpose of the legislation before you.

Ultimately, we are very concerned that the removal of funding from the system to support these dual and external credits may actually cause a further reduction in board budgets and put other existing programs in jeo-

parody. It's not clear at all who would do the oversight and administrative work associated with these credits.

The Chair: Just to advise you, you have a little less than two minutes.

Ms. Kimberley-Young: Thank you. All the educational goals of the bill, we believe, can be accomplished within the existing curriculum, within the legislation and certainly constructively with our help. We would love to see the innovative programs continue. We'd love to see more pilots. We'd love to study those to see what works best. We would like to see co-op programs and opportunities expanded. We need to see an improvement and advancement of what's available in our technical education programs. Frankly, if it's the students at risk whom we are most trying to reach, we need to make sure the supports they need in their regular school program are also being met. We want to work constructively to help students learn successfully. There is nothing we want more as a federation. This legislation does not achieve it.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That, almost to the second, concludes the time that you have allotted. I thank you very much for your time today.

Our next deputation will be from Matthew Corney. Is Matthew Corney in the room?

1640

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 10

The Chair: OSSTF, District 10. Mr. Devin Pearson? Good afternoon. Make yourself comfortable. You'll have 10 minutes for your deputation this afternoon. If you leave any time remaining, it will go to the parties in rotation. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard, and then proceed.

Mr. Devin Pearson: Good afternoon. My name is Devin Pearson. I am the president of OSSTF, district 10, in Lambton-Kent, where we represent over 600 teachers. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to bring forth my concerns regarding Bill 52.

First and foremost, let me be clear in stating that we do not feel that Bill 52 is necessary. Current legislation exists that provides opportunities for school boards to expand and increase learning opportunities. In order for boards to do this, what is needed is long-term funding that is adequate and sustainable. This funding must be provided. Many boards across the province currently have projects in place that meet the expectations of Bill 52. Many boards, including the Lambton-Kent District School Board, have initiated or participated in pilot projects but, due to a lack of funding, have cancelled said initiatives in most cases. Funding that is ongoing, as I said, is what is needed, not Bill 52.

We currently have many success stories in our schools: co-op education and the partnerships required with community partners. These credits are tied to the curriculum, supervised by certified teachers, and provide students with real-life and real-work experience. The Ontario youth apprenticeship program and experiential

learning program, aimed at providing students with the skills necessary to gain valuable training and expertise, have been in place and are successful. New partnerships are always being sought out, including the recently-announced co-op placement with the 1st Hussars, a regiment in the Canadian Armed Forces. These programs have proven to be successful. They work well. The programs that already exist need to be expanded and funded adequately. These programs all have one thing in common: They are tied to the curriculum and supervised by certified teachers. Bill 52 will seriously undermine these initiatives by allowing uncertified providers to deliver courses to our students.

My question, in closing, is: If the system is not broken, why are we trying to fix it? I hope that, given what you have heard today from many people, you will rescind Bill 52 immediately.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Mario Racco): We've got about six minutes, so I'll start with Mr. Klees. Two minutes each, please.

Mr. Klees: Two minutes.

The Vice-Chair: Yes. Or less.

Mr. Klees: That's a very consistent message you've given us: Rescind Bill 52. What we've heard is that we couldn't pull together enough amendments to actually plug all the holes in this thing. I asked the minister during question period today whether she would be prepared to do that, and what she said was that she was looking for wording from stakeholders to fix the bill. In your opinion, is it possible to fix this? Can we find the words to fix this bill, or is it best to just pull back and get on with life, and put in place a cheque instead of a bill?

Mr. Pearson: It would certainly be welcome to rescind the bill, for sure. And adequate funding, as I said. I stated that clearly.

Mr. Klees: Thank you. That's a good theme, Chair: a cheque instead of a bill.

The Chair: Mr. Tabuns.

Mr. Tabuns: Thanks for the presentation. It's pretty clear to most of us that this bill is fatally flawed. Why on earth do you think this bill has been brought forward? You know what needs to be done to keep kids in school. Can you speculate as to why this bill is before us?

Mr. Pearson: No, I can't. Sorry.

Mr. Tabuns: No. You know, it's a mystery to me as well. I have to agree with the opposition here. I can't see any reason to continue with this; I can't see amendments that would make this particular dead bill live. I would just hope that you and other teachers are organizing and mobilizing to ensure that it's withdrawn.

I don't have a question; I'm just expressing a hope.

The Chair: Mr. McMeekin?

Mr. McMeekin: Thanks. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. I think there are 45,000 high school students out there who drop out who might want to debate whether it needs fixing or not, but we've got a couple of student stories. I'll just read a sentence from each.

"I thought this dual credit hospitality program was great. I want to be in this industry in the future—so this

program is giving me a head start on my career. Joseph Behse.” He’s involved in the hospitality services specialist program in Thunder Bay.

Lewis Laforme, the school within a college program: “The SWAC program allows students to explore the ‘trades’ while being treated as adults. I love the college setting and find it less distracting than high school. I like working at my own pace to make up credits and find that I try harder than ever to complete work. Students are able to recover credits in order to graduate and now they feel like they have a future.”

So there are some good experiences out there—co-op education and some of the dual credit programs that are working. I just want to make sure that’s on the record and thank the gentleman for his presentation.

The Chair: Mr. Pearson, do you have any brief closing words?

Interjection.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much for your deputation and for taking the time to come in and present to us this afternoon.

WESTDALE HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATION

The Chair: The Westdale Home and School Association, Jean Lewis Knight. Welcome this afternoon. If you’ve been around here a little while, you’ll know that you have 10 minutes for your deputation. If you leave any time remaining, it will go to the parties in rotation. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then proceed.

Ms. Jean Lewis Knight: Jean Lewis Knight. I am currently the president of the Westdale Home and School Association, the interim chair of the Hamilton-Wentworth Parent Involvement Committee and also the first vice-president of the Hamilton-Wentworth Council of Home and School Associations. But first and foremost, I am here today as a parent of four children within the system, two of whom are at the secondary level.

It was with a great deal of debate and dissension, and sometimes disgust, that parents were introduced to the notion of standardized testing and common curricula for students of Ontario. I could share personal anecdotes at this point that would far exceed my allotted 10 minutes, and perhaps illustrate the good, the bad and the ugly. Be that as it may, and with personal preferences aside, there is something to be said for knowing that an applied credit or an academic credit awarded in Hamilton is equivalent to one awarded in North Bay or anywhere else in the province. This is of great importance, not just for parents and students but to universities, colleges and industry.

The proposed changes in granting up to eight secondary credits by recognized youth organizations, as stated in the bill, could very well change that simple fact. At first glance, most people think that it would be wonderful for students to be able to gain credits through the Royal Conservatory of Music or college, but that is not the limitation on the bill. A credit could be granted at the

direction of the individual district school boards, by Scouts Canada, religious factions or perhaps even a political organization. I did have “Progressive Conservative Youth,” but they made me take that out. This could be a very slippery slope. Can we ever predict the ending?

So many new programs and initiatives are in place to ensure that students can be successful, but they need secured long-term funding and the luxury of time to illustrate their value. These include credit recovery classes, increased co-op programs and locally developed courses that are linked to individual communities. All of these initiatives are balanced with classroom requirements, structured evaluation, trained staff to monitor and guidelines for students. The new pathways approach has just been launched and it should be given the opportunity to prove itself. Why do we need to extend this portion and leave it so open-ended before we see the results of what has so recently been instituted?

1650

Built into existing programs is a WSIB component so that the student understands and is well aware of the expectations and restrictions of their study outside of the traditional school setting. As the bill is written, there will not be a requirement that this be addressed. Who will be liable in the case of an accident—the school board, the organization or the province?

At some point in the granting of a credit, a trained professional should be included in the evaluation process to ensure that the best interests of the students are being met. With the possibility of eight credits—some of which could be compulsory—granted outside of traditional parameters, secondary schools could lose ministry funding on a per pupil basis that could greatly alter the quality and quantity of programs being offered. This is not only at the perceived lower end of the academic scale but in some cases at the more crucial artistic level as well. At Westdale, for example, we currently offer a board-wide strings program. If all of the parents who could financially afford to send their children to the conservatory did so, would the program still be viable to offer to the rest of the student body? We attract students from no less than 15 census tracts, many of which are middle- to lower-income. Should all of those students not benefit from the incredible instruction and performance opportunities currently offered?

Most studies support that the engaged student is more likely to succeed in school and in life. This is touted as one of the reasons behind the bill, but I would beg to differ in regard to the results. Secondary school expectations far exceed what you learn in the classroom, but sometimes, more importantly, the involvement in the school community—I could cite examples of how those experiences have shaped my character and subsequently my life. The possibility of negating an entire year of that experience, which has already been shortened technically to four, is beyond scary and approaching absurd. My own children are perhaps members of the most unusual of all extracurricular pursuits, but their value and impact is without comparison, whether it be a defining factor in

receiving a diploma or not. It is the richness and opportunity of the extracurricular portion of the secondary school that can have the greatest impact. Instead of simply pushing to have students stay in school, why not make funding available to engage them earlier, so that they cannot imagine leaving?

Currently, we see many students struggle to complete secondary education, but it may not be as simple an answer as one might think. Students who live on their own, for a myriad of reasons, only receive financial support from government agencies to the amount of \$534 a month. Consider that for a moment. At Westdale we have a diverse student community that extends far beyond what one might expect. Socio-economic factors for many students are an issue. We have instituted a walk-in closet program through a partnership of the administration, staff, students, community and our association. This program offers support to students to encourage them to remain in the school setting by offering food, clothing, cleaning supplies, toiletries and school supplies. Why not consider supporting these positive initiatives that can greatly increase the chances of a student remaining, rather than a negative-billing approach that may seem punitive to students as they attempt to secure jobs, work placements or, in some cases, be able to participate in extracurricular activities? The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board covers a vast geographic area, most of which is not accessible by public transportation.

As a parent, taxpayer and future employer, I need to know that there is integrity and value to the diploma that is awarded. I need to know that expectations were set, met and, perhaps at some times, exceeded or redefined. Bill 52 in its current state does not ensure that I will be secure in that knowledge. What is the goal at this point: to ensure quality education for every student or to ensure that an election promise can be met? One of the buzz phrases right now is "Strive to 85." Are we concerned with giving out a predetermined number of pieces of paper that represent a secondary achievement, or ensuring that our students are well prepared for the future? I hope it is the latter.

In many ways, we fail to celebrate the successes of our students, schools and systems. There are amazing people doing great things, and they deserve your positive support to continue those endeavours. I would urge you to ensure that funding dollars are available and that our students are taught by qualified professionals. I sincerely hope that the future of every student can be full of promise, opportunities and the chance to succeed beyond our expectations.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Mr. Tabuns, a quick question.

Ms. Lewis Knight: Don't feel you have to ask questions.

Mr. Tabuns: Okay, I'll take that under advisement.

Do you think that it would be good for the school environment to have students forced there because they're deprived of a driver's licence?

Ms. Lewis Knight: I don't think that's the right motivation for a child to stay in school. I think that there are lots of wonderful motivating factors right now. There are some incredible things being done in our system, and we need to applaud those things and provide the adequate funding for those things to remain in place—and they're so diverse. My children really are in some of the most unusual extracurricular activities. They're part of the classics conference, where they go with children from all across Ontario and celebrate what is basically a dead language. Having them not get a driver's licence is not going to encourage them to stay in school or promote a positive atmosphere.

Mr. Tabuns: I think the same way.

The Chair: Thank you very much for having come in this afternoon and for your deputation.

AFRICAN CANADIAN LEGAL CLINIC

The Chair: Our next deputation will be from the African Canadian Legal Clinic: Royland Moriah. Good afternoon and welcome. You'll have 10 minutes for your deputation this afternoon. In the event that you don't use all of the time, it will go to the parties, in rotation, for questions. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then proceed.

Mr. Royland Moriah: My name is Royland Moriah. I'm the policy research lawyer at the African Canadian Legal Clinic. I'd like to thank you, first off, for the opportunity to present; we made the decision to do so on quite short notice, just a couple of days ago, because we thought it would be good to at least raise a couple of issues and really one issue that's of critical importance to us and to our community with respect to Bill 52.

I'll let you know a little bit about the African Canadian Legal Clinic. We are a legal clinic that's funded by Legal Aid Ontario. Our mandate is to conduct legal work aimed at addressing systemic discrimination, primarily through a test case litigation strategy. In doing so, we've been involved in cases before tribunals and all levels of court, up to and including the Supreme Court of Canada. We also, of course, are involved in monitoring legislation—and that is the reason I'm here today—and engaging in advocacy and public legal education, all aimed at eliminating racism and anti-black racism.

The issue of education, obviously, as for all communities, is something that's very important for our community as well. It's something that we do quite a bit of in terms of the work at the ACLC—and I'll refer to us as the ACLC throughout my presentation here. In terms of the work that we have done, it has been advocacy at all levels, whether dealing with problems that teachers have—also to parents and students—in a variety of matters and arenas.

We're pleased to have the opportunity to present on this bill. This education issue, as I said, is very critical to our community, mostly because of the position that we're in in terms of the education of our children at this point in time.

Unfortunately, the dropout rates for African-Canadian students still remain unacceptably high. I think that's something that probably doesn't come as a surprise to a lot of people on the committee, but it is something that continues to be a problem.

A 1997 study, which is quite old, by George Dei, indicated that the dropout rate was 44% for African-Canadian students.

In terms of some new information—and I know that this is something that you might want to take a look at yourself, because it actually talks about high school graduation rates for a number of communities, specifically in the GTA. This was work that was done by Michael Ornstein at York University. According to his study as well, which was just released this year, it's very much the same in terms of lack of graduation from high school for people of African descent, either from the African continent or even from the Caribbean, and also indigenous African-Canadians. Given that reality, it's obviously very important that we really critically look at the strategies that we're putting in place to address the issue of increasing high school graduation rates for all students, not only for African-Canadian students.

I know, from looking at some of the submissions from some of the previous presenters, that a lot of them have already talked about the fact that there doesn't seem to be any discussion of whether or not there's a correlation between increasing the compulsory attendance age and actually ensuring that students are going to graduate from high school, and I think that's something that obviously needs to be thought about as we're looking at this piece of legislation.

1700

Really, in terms of our submission, aside from concerns we have—and I know that a couple of the presenters have raised that already—with respect to the issue about the punitive nature of the legislation and the fact that there are fines that are imposed and the fact that there might not, again, be a correlation between suspending licences or not allowing children to have licences and their willingness to go to school because of that. Our primary issue is with respect to whether or not this proposed legislation actually effectively deals with the issue of high dropout rates.

In looking at this legislation, one of the things that strikes me is that it divorces the decision to leave school from the personal circumstances of the student. I think any educator would say, in looking at the reasons why students will drop out, that you can't point to one thing. It's not necessarily a personal decision, that I wake up in the morning and decide to drop out of school. It's a variety of factors, and until we address and look at those factors, we can't honestly say to ourselves that this piece of legislation is going to do what we want it to do. So it's our submission that we have to commit to recognizing and addressing these underlying causes before we can determine what effective strategies we can put in place to deal with the problem.

In terms of the context of African-Canadian students—and they are who I am here to advocate on

behalf of, and I certainly can't say that I advocate on behalf of the entire community; obviously, we have a very diverse community, as many others. But it is a relevant issue for us in terms of looking at that context, in terms of what the barriers are that some of our students face.

In the past, historically, and in the present day as well, we continue to face a lot of situational and systemic barriers, and by "situational" I mean personal barriers, whether it be family dynamics, community dynamics, as well as systemic barriers within the actual system they're receiving their education from. So this can be family dynamics, as I said before; other barriers can include undiagnosed or misdiagnosed behavioural issues, inappropriate use of suspensions and expulsions, a curriculum that's not reflective of the diversity of the city that we live in and of our province as well, and a lack of adequate and culturally appropriate supports for students. So not just adequate supports—it's questionable whether or not those are even available at this point in time—but also culturally appropriate supports recognizing the diversity of our student body across the province.

In that sense and looking back at some of the things the community has said about this in the past, in terms of the African-Canadian community, we have argued consistently that there are a number of systemic barriers that have to be addressed if you're going to take steps to ensure that our students are going to be graduating from high school at higher rates, whether it's streaming, reduced expectations—and that's a very big thing, reduced expectations—or a disproportionate use of suspensions and expulsions. These have resulted in under-education and a lot of these students being actively pushed out of the system. Students who are being suspended constantly, students who are being misdiagnosed, are being pushed out of the system. So we have to question the issue of whether or not they're making these decisions themselves or if they're being pushed out and eventually making the decision given the circumstances they're facing.

What I'm trying to say is, it's not enough to treat the decision to leave school only as a personal decision that's devoid of any social context whatsoever. There are a lot of contributing factors, and it's necessary to devise supports for the students that are reflective of those particular concerns.

While requiring compulsory education till the age of 18 can be part of that strategy—the legislation delineates that aim, and I think that's what's interesting. It's basically delineating an aim without providing any particular strategy for being successful within that aim. In contributing to students' successful completion of high school, we have to commit resources. That's key. We've seen a lot of it in the papers lately. The education system right now is chronically underfunded. The prior speaker talked about the importance of having extracurricular activities, and we know as a fact that a lot of those activities are being cut by schools as they try to balance their budgets. In terms of ways to ensure that students stay in school, that's a critical way of doing it: making sure they have extracurricular activities and supports in

terms of counselling, in terms of adequate classroom sizes. Those are the things that help students to feel comfortable within their educational environment and become successful within it. So it's important in terms of what the government does, aside from this piece of legislation, and there are some concerns about it. People have articulated that.

It's important to ensure that we have decreased class sizes and to ensure that we have effective and accessible special education programs, culturally appropriate programs. Appropriate counselling and attendance services: This is something that has, unfortunately, been scaled back quite a bit in the last couple of years in terms of those people who are there to really counsel and help these students in making their decisions and how they're going to move forward in their educational lives.

The Chair: Just to advise you, you have about a minute and a half.

Mr. Moriah: Sure. No problem. Thank you very much.

Ultimately, really what I'm saying is that we have to make sure that we devise effective strategies so that all students, including African-Canadian students, are put in a position where they recognize the importance of and can make the most of their educational opportunities. Increasing the age of compulsory attendance may help them to understand the importance of staying in school, but without actually addressing the reasons why they drop out, the legislation is really symbolic at best. So, regardless of the rationale, punishing the symptom, which is what we're doing right here, is unsound. We need to think rationally about what we're doing and realize that instead what we need to do is devise effective strategies so that we can deal with the root causes of the problem. I hope that in the course of your review of this piece of legislation, you'll keep that in mind. I'm sure that you have thought about that as well.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your thoughtful and insightful comments. There is, unfortunately, not time for questions in this round, but thank you for coming today.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 6A

The Chair: OSSFTF, District 6A, Thunder Bay: Terry Hamilton. Good afternoon.

Mr. Terry Hamilton: Good afternoon.

The Chair: You'll have 10 minutes for your deputation today. If there is time remaining, it will go to the parties in rotation. Please begin by stating your name for Hansard and then proceed.

Mr. Hamilton: Thank you. My name is Terry Hamilton. I am the president of District 6A, Thunder Bay, of the OSSTF. I also notice on the list that I'm the only deputation, I believe, from northwestern Ontario today, and I'd like to thank the committee for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of both District 6A and, I believe, the north, around Bill 52, the Learning to Age 18 Act.

I'm going to highlight a couple of things. At the end of my presentation I'm going to be looking at some of the factors that I believe might be particular to the north. I'm going to start, however, by perhaps talking about some of the programs we have.

First of all, I believe that the intent of Bill 52 was to improve the educational level of our children, our students, by ensuring that they remain in school until they graduate from secondary school at the age of 18. The bill uses a carrot-and-stick method of encouraging those disengaged students to stay in school. The carrot was those alternative learning opportunities and enhanced experiential learning that more closely matches their learning styles and abilities. I think the stick was the removal of drivers' licences for students who aren't involved in a learning activity before they turn 18. I don't even know what to say about that. One of the first teacher instructors I ever had said, "Don't ever make education a punishment." That's all I'll say about that.

OSSTF members from across the province are aware of the benefits of achieving a secondary diploma. Those students who receive a diploma have a greater chance of securing a job and earning a greater salary. They also have the ability to move on to post-secondary education, allowing them to participate in an increasingly technical world.

OSSTF members across the province have worked to try to create programs for students who have been disengaged from the traditional school model to continue with their education. In Thunder Bay, there have been a number of pilot projects involving many partners, including the Lakehead District School Board. These projects have had the goal of increasing opportunities for students and helping them find their pathways to the future.

The projects in Thunder Bay, I think, however, can highlight both the strengths and the weaknesses of the dual credit programs. I want to emphasize, though, that all of the programs we have had so far in Thunder Bay have used certified secondary teachers for either teaching credits or monitoring co-op placements.

1710

The first program I want to talk about I believe was somewhere around an abject failure. The advanced automotive practices program involved hand-picking 14 students who already had an interest in automotive and showed some expertise in their secondary automotive classes. Prior to actually enrolling in the program, they wrote the evaluation of academic readiness for apprenticeship training test—I think they usually call it EARAT because it's easier than that mouthful—from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. All but one of those students was able to demonstrate that they had the academic ability. They actually scored higher than most apprentices when they start apprentice training. One student was perhaps on the bubble in terms of the fact that they would have to work very hard to be successful in this program. That was known before they went in.

The program basically was that students were earning four co-op credits at an automotive dealership from their home secondary schools. At the same time, there was an

eight-week block in the middle of this co-op where they went to the college and did the basic level apprenticeship training from college instructors. There was a secondary teacher who was monitoring the program. He tried meeting with the instructors, and when he met with them they said, "Everything is going fine. All the students are doing well. Well, maybe there's a couple of students who aren't doing so well." At the end of the eight-week process when the students finally got their marks, three out of the 14 managed to actually get the basic level training. The college instructors complained about the students being disruptive. They complained about their work ethic. I guess the difficulty was that they didn't even give the coordinator enough advance notice that these students were having difficulties—the secondary teacher was the coordinator—and to intervene on their behalf. I don't believe that those college instructors have the training or experience in dealing with adolescents. When the coordinator described the students' behaviour to me, it sounded pretty much like 17-year-old boys hanging around together. Most of our secondary teachers have had that experience working with adolescents. We have the training in working with adolescents.

I'd like to compare that program to the College Link program that is being run in Thunder Bay. I know that Mr. Peat in an earlier submission talked a little bit about their program in Niagara, which seems to be very similar. The College Link program was designed for students between the ages of 18 and 20 who have not graduated but who have at least 20 secondary credits. The program is actually housed at Confederation College. There are two secondary teachers working with those students; however, the students also have the opportunity to take a college credit. So not only are they working towards their high school diploma, but they're also managing to get at least one college credit when they finish this program. These were high-risk students. These are the students who Mr. McMeekin keeps talking about when he mentions those 45,000 students. Twenty-two of the 33 who were in the program last year graduated. Because you start with 20 credits, it's going to be awfully difficult to get 10 in one year. Some of them may have to go to other programs, and there are other programs in Thunder Bay for those students.

Bruce Ferguson, in his study into early school leavers, points to the inability of some students to make a connection as one of the reasons for those students dropping out of school. I believe the previous speaker talked about co-curricular activities, about sports and teams and drama groups and that. I think that is important, and that is one of the reasons why so many students stay.

For these students, however, their connection was largely with the secondary instructors who were in the program. They made a connection with that, they made a connection with the location, because they're in with their peer groups and they weren't older than everybody around them. I believe that that is why they're successful. So I believe that the success was because they had certified teachers who have training in dealing with adolescents, who have training in assessment and evalu-

ation, who have access to OSRs—Ontario student records—who have access to the individual educational plans of students and who also abide by the ethical standards and the standards of practice from the College of Teachers.

The Chair: Terry, just to advise you, you've got about two minutes.

Mr. Hamilton: I would like to have talked about the hospitality program, which is similar, but I'm going to move on to some of the northern Ontario issues.

The aboriginal issue is a concern of mine. Although we do not have a process for identifying aboriginal students at my board, we know that their numbers are growing. We have had students who've been moving in from those northern boards. They tend to have a lower ability in oral language, by about two years on average. They don't need to be in some external program. What they need is the supports from the teachers, the EAs, the paraprofessionals, the psychologists. I think that the ministry should be funding these students and their needs appropriately.

Also, in northwestern Ontario, we're experiencing a decline in the population of about 3% a year. That's not even talking about the fact that some of the mills in the area, the forestry industry, are certainly being affected. Already, we are closing schools. In my school board, they're going to be going from six schools down to four secondary schools by next year. I believe that if Bill 52 is passed, it's going to just exacerbate the situation.

I believe that Bill 52 is an attack on publicly funded education. I believe it's an attack on the equity of access. I believe that it creates educational vouchers. I believe it's an attack on the professionalism of teachers and educational workers. I believe that Bill 52 will do great harm. Bill 52 should be withdrawn.

The Chair: That concludes the time that we have for you. Thank you for coming in today.

MATTHEW CORNEY

The Chair: I am advised that a deputant who had not arrived earlier, Matthew Corney, is now here. Matthew Corney? Welcome, and have a seat. You'll have 10 minutes to make your deputation this afternoon. If you have any time remaining, it'll go to the parties in rotation for questions. Please begin by stating your name clearly for Hansard and then proceed.

Mr. Matthew Corney: Matthew Corney, representing Sterling Education, and my colleague Don Hardwick. First of all, I'd like to thank the chairperson and the committee members for hearing us this afternoon and giving us the privilege to speak on Bill 52.

As I said before, I represent Sterling Education. We're a Christian education organization with campuses across the country, including three here in Ontario. Although we're independent of the public system, we operate in line with the government's requirements, and our schools have been recognized by the government.

We applaud the government's efforts to encourage all students to complete their high school education in view

of a more prosperous future for the student and to help ensure that everyone's a vital contributor to the prosperity of this province. While supporting the government's noble efforts to ensure high school completion, we pause to consider the implications of withholding students' driver's licences and feel queasy about the government using non-education-related penalties to enforce this.

If this bill were to become law, it would be the first foot in the door of government-mandated regulation of what may or may not be taught, even eventually in private schools. Although it is surely not the intent of this government to move further in this direction, it does provide scope for a future education minister to demand compliance with what they may feel is required, irrespective of Christian teaching as set out in the Holy Bible.

It is alarming to note that this very week, the Quebec government announced plans to force Christian schools to teach the theory of evolution, which is directly against the laws of God and the teaching of scripture. As has been stated, we are assured that this government is not following in Quebec's footsteps, but this action does highlight the danger of where this could go should a precedent be established as to what you can do or cannot do to receive a diploma.

We stress again that we are desirous of strengthening the hands of right government and are continually exercised in prayer, both publicly and privately, that good government be maintained in this country.

1720

As the Apostle Paul says in I Timothy 2:1, "I exhort, therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men, for kings and all that are in dignity, that we may lead a tranquil life in all piety and gravity for this is acceptable before our saviour, God." We would humbly suggest that the government explore other means to ensure high school completion by way of incentive rather than penalty.

In closing, we would simply ask you to consider the long-term ramifications of the proposed bill, and to ensure that we are not blazing a trail that may lead to the suppression of Christian conscience and a denial of religious freedoms. Thank you for your time.

The Chair: We may even have a chance for each party to ask you a question, if they choose, beginning with Mr. McMeekin.

Mr. McMeekin: Thanks for your presentation. I've been a long-time supporter of faith-based education for those who choose it, just for the record.

I'm wondering if you could just share with me your last line. I mean, the driver's licence stuff we're going to have to deal with, obviously. There's been a lot of stuff on that and we will deal with that. But the issue about the suppression of Christian conscience and denial of religious freedom—I don't think there's anybody in this room who wants to do that. So I'm wondering if there's something specific in the bill that you think will lead to

the suppression of Christian conscience and denial of religious freedom?

Mr. Corney: I can speak generally and maybe my colleague could speak more specifically on it. There are a number of changes in the bill, when I looked at it, that would appear to change and shift some power to the Minister of Education. That was my general concern.

Mr. McMeekin: Okay.

Mr. Don Hardwick: I was just brought into this to support Matthew in his presentation. I'm a member of the board for our school in Burlington. What bothered us was that in the inspection of the schools we found that because of the fact that we wouldn't teach certain things, we were not considered a school that's giving an equivalent education. That's our concern, and then—

Mr. McMeekin: This bill doesn't deal with any of that—

Mr. Hardwick: Well, that's what we're concerned about, that equivalent learning does come into it.

Mr. McMeekin: Let me just provide assurance that that's not the intent of the bill. I think there may be some constitutional things that have been in the news recently that will need to wind their way through whatever process, but this isn't the process.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth–Middlesex): Briefly, Mr. Chair, just to add to that some context. Of course, for the provincial government to pass any law it must be compliant with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. So there is no bill that can be drafted by this Legislature and passed where there would be any opinion that it wasn't constitutional, though that doesn't mean that others may not challenge it. But it is required in Canadian law. So I know you might look at that and say, "Is this some thin edge of the wedge?" But I'd hazard a guess that it is not the intention of the government to challenge the Charter with any piece of legislation.

The Chair: All right. Was there an observation you wanted to make on Mr. Wilkinson's comments? You would have the last word on this one.

Mr. Corney: My only comment is that the driver's licence seems to be the most obvious part of it that everyone is contending. But I'm just not sure in myself. I'm not restful in the subtleties of the other changes in the bill as to what the interpretation of those would be.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you very much for taking the time to come in and make your deputation with us this afternoon.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL
TEACHERS' FEDERATION, LIMESTONE
DISTRICT 27

The Chair: OSSTF, Limestone District 27—Steve Newstead.

Mr. Steve Newstead: First of all, I hope my voice holds up throughout this.

The Chair: All of the people here hope so as well. The microphones are pretty good. You can speak very softly.

Mr. Newstead: My name is Steve Newstead. I'm here kind of wearing several hats today. I'm here as a teacher, I'm here as a parent, and I'm also the president of the teachers' bargaining unit of OSSTF, Limestone district 27. Limestone district 27 is Frontenac county and Lennox and Addington counties down at the eastern tip of Lake Ontario, in beautiful Kingston.

Over the last four years, the Ontario Liberal government has embraced public education with the infusion of much-needed financial resources and reform. It's with dismay and disappointment that I felt compelled to make this trip to Toronto today to present my concerns regarding Bill 52 to this committee.

There's one aspect of Bill 52 that I possibly could support, and that's increasing the school leaving age to 18. I'm hopeful that this legislative change, if made—and I want to underline “if,” because I'm still not totally sold on it—implemented properly and supported by the educational workers, will result in declining youth dropout rates. Punitive measures such as fines and withholding or suspending a driver's licence are not necessary.

That said, I find several aspects of Bill 52 relating to dual and external credits extremely distressing. The passage of such legislation will be a major step backwards for public education. It will bring us one step closer to the privatization of our education system. I have heard repeatedly in meetings with Liberal cabinet ministers that the Premier of Ontario wants to be known and remembered as the education Premier. Bill 52 does not represent that vision.

As a former apprentice and licensed tradesperson in Ontario, I left my trade of choice and entered education. I certainly didn't leave my trade because I wanted to earn more money; I actually took a significant pay cut. I entered education because I wanted to make a difference in kids' lives, encouraging each of them to work to the best of their ability and help them earn their Ontario secondary school diploma. I wanted to give back to public education what it gave me: confidence, acceptance, drive, desire and so on, as well as the ability to choose a career path and become a contributing member of society. This path to success is still fresh in my mind. I remember many of my classroom teachers and the support they gave me. While attending trade school, community college and later the faculty of education, I still consulted with my past secondary school teachers for guidance and advice.

What I fear is that Bill 52 will impose drastic changes to the delivery of secondary school credits in Ontario. Currently, secondary school credits are delivered by certified teachers of Ontario who know the Ontario curriculum and the appropriate evaluation methods attached to it. Ontario's teachers must currently attend a recognized faculty of education and be members of the Ontario College of Teachers, our professional college. I ask, why would the government want to allow Ontario secondary school credits to be delivered by non-certified, unqualified individuals? Why would the Ontario Liberal government want to entertain the idea of having credits delivered by private businesses or special interest

groups? This was a Conservative vision, I hope not a Liberal one.

Currently in my district, the Limestone District School Board, our full education team is a success story. Ask Minister Gerretsen: His son is one of our success stories. OSSTF members currently demonstrate their innovation and dedication through many of our unique programs. Many years ago, we began running focus programs, programs structured to specific areas such as the building trades, where students work with local contractors under the direct supervision of a certified teacher to build a house. We are currently building several houses a year with our partners. We also offer intensive full-day multi-credit programs in manufacturing, automotive, culinary arts, hairdressing, cosmetology, upholstery, marine—and the list goes on. I personally built a recording studio and ran a four-credit sound recording and production program. I'd like to note that each of these credits is 110 hours in length, not 45 hours to 65 hours as we see in our college system. We also have several Ontario youth apprenticeship programs up and running. These programs are designed to help kids stay in school, offer them an alternative education structure and tend to draw a large number of at-risk kids who otherwise may not stay in school.

1730

In the mid 1990s, the Conservative government had a great new curriculum reform idea called broad-based technology. I feel that this was implemented to reduce the investment required to maintain technology programs and shops. During this period we saw technology shops closed and the equipment sold off for scrap. It was replaced with Popsicle stick and glue-gun technology.

We are now facing a major shortage of skilled trades workers in Ontario. It's imperative that Ontario's students are introduced to many of these trades in secondary schools. I thought the Liberal government was on the right track. Bill 52 takes us in the wrong direction.

Let us not kid ourselves. Provincial funding is directly tied to students. If you allow Bill 52 to pass and provincially funded credits are offered outside the public education system, we will see funding cuts, layoffs, and our crumbling infrastructure will continue to deteriorate. The previous government nearly destroyed public education in Ontario. The current government made a pledge to rebuild it.

The Ontario education system is currently working, and working well. Bill 52 is not the answer to improving public education, and I fear it will take kids out of school, not keep them in it. I'm requesting that you withdraw Bill 52. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much for your deposition. Questions?

Mr. Klees: Thank you. I appreciate your presentation. It's interesting: I appreciated the fact that many of the presentations today reference the fact that in order to do the equivalent, education programs really don't need this legislation.

Mr. Newstead: They absolutely do not.

Mr. Klees: It's really redundant.

It was actually the previous government that brought in the framework, as referenced by OSSTF's submission, the Ontario secondary schools grades 9 and 12 program diploma requirements in 1999 that set out the locally developed courses of school work, transition programs and so on.

Given the fact that the framework is there to do what needs to be done—and I think what I hear you saying is that if the government were simply to put the resources into the programs and the framework that's already there to expand and strengthen them, which would be consistent with the commitment the Liberal Party made during the last election, that would solve the problem.

I'd be interested in your thought, as you contemplate what the Liberal Party said they were going to do and then this bill, which seems to be a total about-face in terms of ideology and certainly in policy. What could possibly be behind this Bill 52? Why would they do this?

Mr. Newstead: Whether it comes down to money, I think there is no doubt—I'm sure there are other individuals lobbying to deliver Ontario secondary school credits outside the public school system. Why you would want to go in that direction, to be honest with you, I have absolutely no idea. If you're entertaining the idea of going to publicly funded, religion-based education or publicly funded interest group education and so on, I'm at a loss for words.

Mr. Klees: Here's something very interesting. You see, the previous government, regardless of what you might think of it, did not go that distance, which is why this government needs to bring in legislation now, to open up that door so that unqualified people can provide this kind of instruction in these equivalent programs. We oppose that. We believe very strongly that we need qualified people in the classroom. So we've been calling on the government not to try to fix this, because we believe it's unfixable. What they should do is simply withdraw this and replace the bill—

The Chair: Steve, you get the last word on this.

Mr. Klees: —and replace the bill with a cheque, which is really what you're saying, which is what we hear the teachers' unions calling for because they're realizing that there's a huge shortfall in terms of program commitments and actual funding that's going into school boards.

Mr. Newstead: And if this bill passes, I guess we no longer need faculties of education, I guess we no longer need Ontario teachers' certificates and teacher qualifications, and I guess we no longer need the Ontario College of Teachers if those qualifications don't mean anything.

The Chair: Thank you very much for having come in today and delivered your thoughts to us.

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL
SECONDARY SCHOOL

The Chair: Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School, Hamilton: Susan Pretula. Welcome. Please make yourself comfortable. You'll have 10 minutes to make your remarks to us this afternoon. If you leave any time re-

maining, it will go to the parties in rotation. Please begin by stating your names for Hansard, and then proceed.

Ms. Susan Pretula: My name is Susan Pretula, and to my right is my daughter Nicole Pretula, a 17-year-old student in grade 12 in Hamilton. I am currently the school council chair for Sir Winston Churchill Secondary School in Hamilton. I'd like to thank you all for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the parents of my school as well as the many other parents that I liaise with on a daily basis in Hamilton. My involvement in volunteering is quite extensive and I will not give a list of my affiliations, but suffice it to know that I do speak with many a parent. Bill 52 has caused a great stir amongst us, and a genuine fear.

As a 23-year volunteer within Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, I have been witness to many changes in education, and I am quite honestly shocked about Bill 52 and the dire consequences which will result if this bill is passed.

I will begin my time by briefly commenting on the section of the bill which suggests that drivers' licences could be tied to school attendance. While this theoretically may deter some young people from dropping out of school, I would like to inquire as to how realistically this scenario can possibly be played out and who is going to track it. On a daily basis, I see how incredibly busy administrators and support staff are. When are they possibly going to find time to oversee and track this piece of legislation? Their jobs are complex enough as it is; they certainly don't need another layer built into their administrative duties. Let's use the resources that are already in place for students' retention and expand those existing programs with a meaningful infusion of money, as opposed to implementing punitive measures to retain students in school.

Now on to the most controversial aspects of Bill 52 for myself and many others.

I and many other parents have passionately witnessed the evolution of the secondary school system. We all lived through, I'm sorry to say, the horrors of Bill 160 and bore witness to those teachers who passionately withdrew their services to demonstrate their alarm at that bill. Now we as parents are moved to loudly demonstrate our concerns against this bill and to preserve the integrity of the teaching profession in Ontario.

This bill strikes at the very core and integrity of our school system and the professionals who work diligently to uphold those values. The vision and expectation that I have for my child's secondary school diploma does not include a portion for—excuse my analogy—“drive-through credits.” Our children need to be assured that their hard-earned secondary credits have been delivered and subsequently graded by the highly professional teachers that we have in Ontario.

This is yet another example of contradictory messages that governments present to our parents and students. One moment they want teachers to go through a re-certification process to prove their teaching credentials, and then, by a flip of government, we are now going to

have non-certified instructors grant credits to our students. Surely, even with differing fundamental ideas and political ideology, and regardless of which side of the Legislature you sit on, one can see how impractical and illogical Bill 52 is.

I cannot believe that this government would stoop so low as to now legislate the outsourcing of the very fabric that holds this system together: our teachers. Where is the integrity of the province's educational system heading?

According to my calculations, close to 30% of my child's credits could potentially be earned externally. Why are we reinventing the wheel when an existing system is already in place for equivalent learning?

Bill 52 contains no standards; it just vaguely alludes to future guidelines which will be developed by the minister. This in turn would once again download the nasty decision-making on policies and procedures to individual boards. That in turn would allow for inconsistent practices province-wide.

I am strongly urging you to reconsider and allow our secondary students to be able to hold up their diplomas proudly and know that they were obtained with the guidance, support and professional expertise of highly skilled teachers. Do you honestly believe that if our secondary students were to apply to one of our prestigious universities, such as, of course, McMaster, U of T, McGill or Queen's, or even possibly abroad at Harvard or Oxford, that those institutions would actually recognize or value those eight external credits as being legitimate? I think not. I have friends who work for university admissions offices and they have shuddered at the thought of these types of acquired credits.

1740

What are we really telling our students? Our public education system has gone through extensive changes over the last century, but mostly dramatically, I believe, within the last 10 to 15 years. I never expected this type of legislation to come from this sitting government. Will this bill really help to facilitate the ministry's goal of achieving an 85% graduation rate for our students, which has been highly touted and widely promoted? To what end are we willing to go in order to achieve that artificial goal? Is achieving that lofty goal more important than preserving the integrity of our teaching profession?

When I went to school, teachers were revered. I guess I was premature or naive in believing that we were at long last heading into an era of stability and good faith between all of the education stakeholders. What has happened to the entire institution of education and the deeply rooted respect that our society has traditionally held for teachers? What's being fundamentally said when this government proposes to legislate a bill which would negate a teacher's professional value and further erode societal respect?

As a parent, I want—no, I demand—that only qualified teachers teach my child. Our students have the right to expect and receive their formal public education to be delivered by qualified and certified teachers, not instructors. What will happen to the entire integrity of the

teaching profession if uncertified people are delivering equivalent credits?

Has anyone really thought about the liability involved with having these uncertified and unqualified instructors deliver programs to our children? Who is going to protect our children? How will students and administrators blend these two modes of delivery? What about the support services that greatly assist in the students' learning? As mentioned several times previous to myself, we all know that 110 hours is the requirement for obtaining a credit. That's not going to be the case with equivalent credits. What type of assessment will be offered to guarantee that students have achieved the curriculum requirements? Teachers are the only approved body which can guarantee that my child will receive an approved delivery of the government's curriculum expectations.

I never thought it possible that our teachers would have to now worry about their jobs being outsourced. And I never, ever thought that I would have to worry there would come a day when my child was being instructed rather than taught. Would you want your surgery to be performed by instructors if the Ministry of Health told you that they were safe, or would you demand to be treated by qualified, certified surgeons, who, through rigorous schooling and testing, were able and accountable to a professional organization? The same holds true in educating our children. I don't want second-best, I want the best. Teachers, not instructors, are parents' only legitimate choices. So why would we now allow for our current system to be dismantled? I truly believe that this will be the start of a voucher system in the province. That is not my vision for an Ontario public education system.

Our children expect and deserve much better than what is being proposed in Bill 52. Some day these same students who have had these types of decisions forced on to them will be the same ones who will be making decisions about our future. Do we really want that? Will we be able to honestly expect them to make good decisions based on moral and ethical platforms that weren't taught by qualified teachers?

It's already possible within the legislation to increase and expand equivalent learning programs through the document Ontario Secondary Schools, Grades 9-12: Program and Diploma Requirements, 1999.

Before I conclude with my closing statement, I would like to say that my daughter became gravely ill last year. If it wasn't for the support from teachers—not instructors—who went above and beyond to help my child achieve proficiency standing while she was in a hospital for almost an entire year, so that they could support her in her education—those are the professionals I want, not an outside instructor who doesn't care that my child would only be a number. Sorry.

Bill 52 is not necessary. Please seriously consider the negative consequences of moving this bill forward. It does not need to be amended, but, rather, withdrawn. Ontario students need you to make good and informed decisions for them. We have all had the opportunity to be

taught by certified teachers. Please don't give our children anything less now. They deserve so much more.

The Chair: Thank you, and almost to the second. You timed it perfectly. I'm sure Mr. Tabuns would have loved to have asked you a question—

Mr. Tabuns: With the indulgence of the Chair and the committee—

The Chair: With the indulgence of the Chair? Only if you'll indulge the Chair by keeping it really short.

Mr. Tabuns: It will be really short. I was a student at Sir Winston Churchill when it opened. I was very young at the time, very young.

Mr. Tim Peterson (Mississauga South): And it still survives.

Mr. Tabuns: And it survived. The parents then were extremely active. I'm glad to see the tradition has continued. Thank you very much.

Mr. McMeekin: I coached soccer there.

Interjections.

The Chair: Thank you very much for having come in. And if I were you, I'd be sending these two alumni donor letters.

Ms. Pretula: Well, that's an excellent thought. Thank you very much.

ONTARIO SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS' FEDERATION, DISTRICT 12

The Chair: Our last word this afternoon comes from OSSTF, district 12, Ken Jeffers. Thank you for sticking with us this afternoon. If you've been here for a little while, you get the general drift of things: You've got 10 minutes to—

Mr. Ken Jeffers: I think I've got the routine, yes.

The Chair: Okay. The time is yours. Please proceed.

Mr. Jeffers: All right. Thank you very much. I'm Ken Jeffers. I am the president of the professional student services personnel of OSSTF, district 12, Toronto. The professional student services personnel, for those of you who don't know, make up front-line student support service staff in the Toronto school board. We represent psychologists, speech pathologists, audiologists, occupational physiotherapists, social workers, child and youth workers, and so on.

Bill 52 is of particular interest to us because in many ways we are living what I perceive to be a reality of what external and dual credits could do to secondary teachers, and that is, outsourcing and privatization. In fact, I've nicknamed Bill 52 the penalties and privatization bill. I think that's probably the best way to sum it up.

I'm going to talk to you a little bit, first, about an administrative education report—a few people have mentioned it already today—from Dr. Bruce Ferguson, the Early Leavers Report. One would think—in a bill on learning to age 18 in Ontario—that the recommendations captured in that report, which only came out last year, would build the framework for what this bill should be about. But, surprisingly enough, the bill is absent of

almost all of the recommendations in that report, and I just want to touch on a few of them.

Dr. Ferguson starts out by saying, "Schools and educators need to be more understanding," and lists a whole bunch of things like "listen," "understand," "recognize" and "accept differences of students." I don't understand how that could even have factored into the imagination of someone who conceived of penalizing students for lower attendance in schools. "Be more flexible"—and in that section he talks about developing a more local-based curriculum. "Disciplinary alternatives"—this is mentioned in expulsion. "Creating improved interprovincial coordination and international assessment of curricula and educational standards," which really flies in the face of what's being proposed in this bill. Lastly, "being more proactive"—he lists a number of recommendations. Some of them are what you would think would be fairly obvious when you're talking about keeping students in school to 18, and it's providing sufficient and appropriate resources for assessment counselling and social service intervention, which is mentioned nowhere in the bill, nor has it been in any of the student success initiatives that have come out of this government in the last number of years. Really, the focus has been on educators to the exclusion of front-line support staff, who work on a daily basis with youth at risk and the hard-to-reach youth whom this bill is attempting to address.

The strange thing about Bill 52 is now it seems to be opening up the attack on teachers. Let me talk a little bit about my experiences in Toronto as president of PSSP and our experiences with outsourcing, which I think directly link to what we will see as a result of dual credits and external credits being offered, as they're outlined in Bill 52.

In Toronto, you may or may not know there are dozens and dozens of external service providers which, on an ad hoc basis, provide programming to schools. Almost all of those are funded by various ministries of this government and over the last three years have been encouraged to set up access points in school boards. In most cases, they don't work closely with school board administrators, let alone the front-line workers who are already providing those services in school boards. At no point has there been a discussion with the school board or the school board administration for student services about what would be needed to address and help students in the Toronto District School Board in terms of additional funding for the board itself. Rather, there have been satellite projects, if you will, that have made fine announcements in the media and in newspapers, but actually, in terms of a continuum of services and sustainability, they don't fit with what is best and what is needed for students in the Toronto District School Board.

1750

Further to that, and perhaps what has been most alarming to both the board and ourselves, is the erosion of the quality of those student services because they are being provided cheaply by people who are not members of registered professional colleges. They're not neces-

sarily subject to an annualized criminal background check, their programming doesn't necessarily fit with existing programs already in the school board and they have almost no familiarity with the education system or the curriculum which they would be normally interacting with in terms of delivering the best available help for students. The board has identified this as a problem, as we have, and we've worked together to help develop some kind of protocol to attempt to stem the tide of this erosion and build a system standard back in, with both external service providers and the current members who are providing that work on a daily basis.

This is where I see external and dual credits leading: If you are going to have external and dual credits, with absolutely no established regulations or standards and not being provided by Ontario College of Teachers teachers, you are opening yourself up for the exact same thing we have seen and experienced and now are fighting to change in Toronto, and that is a slow and obvious erosion of quality public education.

Just to draw on a few more aspects and be a little more specific, the idea of students doing external credits, outside of the school system, and taking the package of funding along with them—so for each credit course, taking the funding dollars associated with that to an external service provider, when everyone seems to have acknowledged thus far that the funding formula is broken and needs to have some major revamping and a review process. I can't understand why, in any good conscience, the government would want to take a broken funding formula, which already doesn't address the economic needs of school boards, and move that money outside to external service providers, unless of course there are some savings for them in it. I suppose maybe that's the direction that we're seeing here, because I can't think of any other reason why.

If this is an attempt to match students—and I mean those high-risk students we talked about, the ones who are at risk of dropping out of school—with more relevant curriculum, it seems to be a rather effortless attempt on the part of this government. It doesn't show any kind of investment in curricular reform. What it shows to me is that it's downloading and privatizing what may be

relevant curriculum to a student but certainly may not be relevant, quality curriculum in terms of what the student is used to getting in Ontario's high schools today.

There's also, obviously, linked to this curriculum—and we've seen this in voucher systems throughout the United States. It's not a drain of the students who are at risk, who are leaving the system. They're usually the ones who suffer the most, because they remain behind, if at all, and the support services that would normally be there for them can't be funded anymore because the credit dollars are leaving out the door with the highest achievers, who are taking advantage of external opportunities. Of course, that leaves you with the high-risk students still in school, and they often end up being streamed into programs which might be external but certainly won't provide the same opportunities that they would be assured of if they had graduated under the current Ontario secondary school diploma.

Lastly, really, this just seems to be an abdication of the government's responsibility to ensure equity of access and a fair and quality public education for all students in Ontario by downloading to local businesses or the community, to be external service providers for external credits and alternative credits.

I just think that the bill needs to be withdrawn. It will hurt students in the end. I can't see any good coming of this bill.

I thank you for your time. If there is any time left, I'll take some questions.

The Chair: I'm afraid you've used up all of your time. I thank you very much for having come in today.

There have been a number of people who have stayed with us all afternoon. I asked the researcher, "How many briefs have we heard today?" We've heard 31 briefs. Everybody had their say. Every deputation cared passionately, and certainly many of you went the extra mile to come here. This is advice to the ministry. You've all spoken very clearly, articulately, eloquently and stayed on time, and done so in good humour.

On behalf of the committee I want to thank everyone who has taken the time to come in here today. The meeting is adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 1757.

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Mr. Peter Tabuns (Toronto–Danforth ND)

Clerk pro tem/ Greffier pro tem

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