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of Ontario  
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**Official Report  
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(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 6 December 2006**

**Mercredi 6 décembre 2006**

Speaker  
Honourable Michael A. Brown

Président  
L'honorable Michael A. Brown

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 December 2006

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 décembre 2006

*The House met at 1330.  
Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

**Mr. Toby Barrett (Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant):** I'm disgusted by the McGuinty government's gross mismanagement revealed in the Auditor General's report. On behalf of John Tory and the PC caucus, I have a message for Mr. McGuinty: You are the link between the hard-working taxpayer of Ontario and these intolerable spending abuses tolerated by your government.

Premier McGuinty's Minister of Children and Youth Services stood in her place yesterday and defended the spending abuses. She said, "The interesting thing is that these issues really aren't new." She's right.

The McGuinty government abused taxpayers' money in 2006, 2005, 2004 and 2003. A true leader steps up to the plate and takes responsibility. This is not about passing the buck, this is not about taking a powder, not about running around the corner and hiding. This is not about letting somebody else take the fall. This is about leadership. We are talking about taxpayers' money that's being spent on trips to Beijing; \$59,000 SUVs and all-inclusive resorts in St. Martin, St. Lucia; \$2,000 gym memberships; deficits, cost overruns, and no analysis by the McGuinty government.

Premier McGuinty, stop insulting the taxpayers of Ontario. No more self-congratulatory spin, no more deflection. We want action. Please stop flushing taxpayers' money down the toilet.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mrs. Liz Sandals (Guelph–Wellington):** Last month, I was pleased to spend a morning volunteering at the long-term-care home at St. Joseph's Health Centre in Guelph. After helping to serve breakfast, I was able to discuss some of the challenges of long-term care with the personal support workers and the nurses. I have also recently visited with residents and families at LaPointe-Fisher long-term care and with staff at Eden House long-term care.

These three homes range in age from fairly old to brand new. Naturally, building standards have changed over the years, but what all three homes have in common

is caring staff who provide high-quality, long-term care for their residents.

The problem we have in Guelph is that there are not enough of these high-quality placements. I often hear from families who are frustrated that the nearest available bed is an hour or more away from Guelph. One woman described to me how she had to take the bus from Guelph to Toronto and then back from Toronto to Orangeville in order to visit her husband.

You can imagine how thrilled I was to announce that the McGuinty government has recognized that Guelph is an underserved area and that 288 new long-term-care beds will be built in Guelph. My constituents are grateful that our government has recognized that long-term-care beds should be located in the home communities of residents and their families.

#### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Jim Wilson (Simcoe–Grey):** Yesterday's report by the Auditor General detailed a laundry list of concerns in the health care sector. Despite the McGuinty rhetoric, the auditor brings to light many skeletons in the closet of this Liberal government and provides more evidence of broken promises and inaction that are directly impacting the quality of life of all Ontarians. The auditor's concerns are wide-ranging, from health card abuses to questionable wait times data to unsafe radiation exposure by patients and staff.

Let's recap some of yesterday's lowlights:

- 300,000 more OHIP cards in existence than the total population in Ontario;

- a backlog of 7,000 fraud investigations involving OHIP cards;

- 725 physicians who are no longer licensed but continue to submit claims to OHIP;

- suspected OHIP billing for patients who did not receive treatment;

- patients and staff being exposed to unhealthy amounts of radiation, including children who were given CT scans when the machine was on the adult setting;

- unfair and unequal access to treatment as Workplace Safety and Insurance Board patients jumped to the front of the line.

On top of this appalling inaction and waste, the auditor calls into question the accuracy of the government's wait times data and advises that claims of reduced wait times be taken with a grain of salt.

As a former Minister of Health, I find the government's response to the auditor's report to be embar-

rassing and call on the current minister to take a long, hard look in the mirror before shifting responsibility for these issues. Clearly, this is his watch.

#### MISS G. PROJECT

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park):** I rise in the House today to acknowledge the incredible contribution to feminism and education made by a group of young women called the Miss G. project.

*Applause.*

**Ms. DiNovo:** There they are. Their mission is to see women and gender studies as a mandatory part of a high school education.

When I was a high school student I remember well that suffragettes, not suffragists, were mocked openly by our Canadian history teacher and by other students. We haven't come such a long way from that day or from the days of Miss G. herself, who, as an academic and activist in the 19th century, was described as "unable to make a good brain that could stand the wear and tear of life."

On this day, when we acknowledge the violence done to women and work for a response, the education system is an obvious place to start, and yet this government has yet to accede to this simple request of the Miss G. project: mandatory women and gender studies courses in high school.

In honour of the hundreds of young women in the Miss G. project, the victims of École Polytechnique and Miss G. herself and other like her, let us now mandate women and gender studies in high schools today, not tomorrow, not next month. The government can do it. Let's see them do it. It is the very least they could do.

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#### STEM CELL RESEARCH

**Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans):** I rise today to inform the House of the tremendous progress being made in stem cell research here in Ontario. The recent grand opening of the Sprott Centre for Stem Cell Research at the Ottawa Health Research Institute is Ontario's latest triumph in this exciting field. The centre has been endowed with a generous \$7-million donation from Eric and Vizma Sprott.

Stem cell research is a priority of Ontario. The government has invested \$16 million on 18 research projects related to stem cells through the Ontario research fund and other predecessor programs. This includes \$4.4 million contributed to the Sprott centre through the Ontario Innovation Trust. We are creating an exciting research climate in Ontario that helps us retain and attract the world's best scientists.

The vision for the Sprott centre originated with Dr. Ron Worton, as a result of his groundbreaking stem cell research in Toronto several years ago. Dr. Worton is CEO and scientific director of the Ottawa Health Research Institute and also serves as vice-chair of the Ontario Research Fund Advisory Board. Dr. Michael

Rudnicki, the inaugural director of the Sprott centre, is also director of Canada's Stem Cell Network. Dr. Rudnicki is joined in Ontario by Dr. Gordon Keller, another leading stem cell scientist, who will be heading up the University Health Network's new McEwen Centre for Regenerative Medicine, here in Toronto.

There are many other examples of pioneering stem cell work being done across the province. All of these developments, from early-stage research through trials and commercialization and eventually to cures, combine to produce a better quality of life for Ontario families.

#### CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

**Ms. Laurie Scott (Haliburton–Victoria–Brock):** Yesterday was a sad day in this Legislature and a sad day for Ontario's most vulnerable children. It was a day when this Liberal government was exposed for its gross mismanagement and waste of taxpayers' money. Unfortunately, waste and overspending is not new to the McGuinty Liberals. What makes the latest revelation most disturbing is the fact that it is the province's children who have been targeted.

The McGuinty Liberals have proven to the hard-working people of Ontario that they cannot be trusted with their tax dollars. When it comes to the McGuinty Liberals, it is no longer, "Watch the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves"; it has sadly become, "Wash off responsibility by breaking promises and saying anything to get elected, and let the kids take care of themselves." Here is some of what the Ministry of Children and Youth Services is making taxpayers responsible for: \$50,000 in luxury cars, all-inclusive vacations, needless trips and junkets to places like China and Argentina, double-dipping for expenses, \$2,000-a-year gym memberships and expensive personal trainers. This is what was discovered when reviewing only four of the 53 children's aid societies. In each one of these cases, the McGuinty Liberal government spent lavishly on themselves rather than being responsible and committing to the care of our most vulnerable people in society, our children.

Even with these shocking revelations, the Liberals still don't get it. In the response to the auditor's findings, the ministry made no mention of gross mismanagement and wasteful spending. Instead, they attempted to pass off responsibility. Someone must be held responsible for these outrageous actions. That starts and ends with the irresponsible and regrettable lack of action of the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

#### LIBRARY SERVICES

**Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing):** I rise today to discuss some very good news with you and all the members of the Legislature about the town of Mattawa. Last Friday, I was delighted to join the mayor of Mattawa, Dean Backer, Councillors Mary Lou Arrow-smith and Garry Thibert, representatives of the Near

North District School Board, the Conseil Scolaire Catholique Franco Nord, Contact North, Canadore College and members of the Mattawa community to celebrate the reopening of the John Dixon Public Library and l'École secondaire F.J. McElligott Secondary School library at F.J. McElligott.

Through some Trillium funding and the Ministry of Culture's funding for libraries, this merger has taken place. The students and all of the community of Mattawa are going to benefit from the refurbished facility within the school proper, which has more computer terminals, a better joint collection, a great children's section, and really lots of excitement about the new facility.

Friday night, the town of Mattawa celebrated Christmas through their very snowy Christmas parade of lights.

This past Monday, the board of the Mattawa General Hospital gathered with the mayor, representatives from the town council, the staff at the hospital and members of the Mattawa community to salute and acknowledge the hard work of 54 past board members and seven past CEOs at their annual Christmas dinner. The group gathered at the Golden Age Club to celebrate all the hard work of the past. The evening culminated with a visit from the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman, and the announcement of final approval for their long-awaited new construction project. The community is overjoyed, and is thrilled that they will gather on December 16 to break ground and enjoy—

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

#### HEALTH PROMOTION

**Ms. Judy Marsales (Hamilton West):** I rise today to celebrate a wonderful model of collaboration in Hamilton, a collaboration to build a healthy community in all aspects of the meaning. This collaboration demonstrates the vision of the Ministry of Health Promotion.

Recently, I was on hand while our government made an announcement of \$2 million in funding for construction of a new facility for the YMCA. This community centre will also be partnered with the city of Hamilton, Hamilton Health Sciences Corp., Hamilton Police Service and the Hamilton Public Library.

The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington will focus on health and wellness and will promote a wide variety of programs, such as recreational activities, for all ages.

The YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington is celebrating 150 years in our community with exemplary leadership, building great relationships with individuals, families and the community, that has affected an amazing number of lives.

I want to applaud Jim Commerford, president and CEO, Bryan Webber, vice-president of finance, and the board of directors of the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington for the wonderful work they have done to create a vision to open this new multi-centre complex in the city of Hamilton.

It was also an honour to have Les Chater and his family in attendance. Mr. Chater has been a member of

the YMCA since he was 10 years old. He is now 95 years old. Mr. Chater has served on the board of directors and continues to be a dynamic spokesman for the YMCA. Mr. Chater was honoured that this new facility will bear his name.

This project will be a model of healthy living for years to come, and I want to thank Minister Watson and the Ministry of Health Promotion for believing in Hamilton.

#### MANUFACTURING JOBS

**Mr. John Wilkinson (Perth-Middlesex):** Christmas came early to the Festival City. On November 30, I was honoured to represent the Honourable Sandra Pupatello at the sod turning for Aisin Canada Inc.'s new manufacturing plant in my hometown of Stratford. Aisin is creating more good jobs in Ontario, the kinds of jobs that bring prosperity to our communities, raise our standard of living and provide greater opportunities for our families.

By establishing a new production plant in Stratford, Aisin Canada is building a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility that will support Toyota's new assembly plant currently under construction in nearby Woodstock. The Aisin Canada plant is a prime example of the wider benefits we anticipated when the McGuinty government began our aggressive auto investment plan just three years ago. Our government knew that by attracting more auto assembly production, the key parts suppliers would follow.

I want to congratulate Stratford Mayor Dan Mathieson, economic development officer Larry Appel and the entire Stratford team on a job very well done.

The Aisin Canada Inc. investment is the result of the Premier's commitment to investing in the education and skills that people need in order to create the best workforce in North America.

I believe that our government is on the right track. Aisin Canada, by creating high-value jobs in the city of Stratford, is helping fulfill the Premier's goal of building North America's most productive auto industry right here in Ontario. For the third year running, Ontario is the leading automotive manufacturing jurisdiction in all of North America. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and merry Christmas.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

**Mr. Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on social policy and move its adoption.

**The Acting Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum):** Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 152, An Act to modernize various Acts administered by or affecting the Ministry of Government Services / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à moderniser diverses lois qui relèvent du ministère des Services gouvernementaux ou qui le touchent.

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### ADULT EDUCATION ÉDUCATION DES ADULTES

**Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne (Minister of Education):**

I rise in the House today to report on the McGuinty government's progress in adult education. As I remind everyone here, adult students are the parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles of the children in our schools.

In June 2005, my report Ontario Learns was released. It documented the lack of cohesion in what I described then as the adult education non-system. I used the image of an archipelago without a good ferry system and recommended how to begin improving this important area of the education continuum.

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L'éducation des adultes est essentielle à la prospérité économique et au bien-être social des personnes et des collectivités en Ontario. That's why we are strengthening the programs and services in adult education.

Today I announced that the McGuinty government is investing an additional \$2 million in this important sector in adult education. This investment will give all adult learners greater access to improved skill assessments and course selection. This is in addition to the recent \$10-million investment made by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for academic upgrading programs that will help 4,200 learners develop their skills and attain better employment.

What I recommended in my report was better coordination of the system. This means more consistency within the government with the ministries responsible for adult education—because adult education is located in at least three ministries. For example, we now deliver more English-as-a-second-language and French-as-a-second-language classes through an investment of over \$50 million each year by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

The development and delivery of programs and services for adult learners will also be more cohesive with our new adult education policy unit created within the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The unit will make it easier for individuals to navigate the adult education system so they can upgrade their knowledge and skills. We want adult learners to spend their time studying and learning, not

trying to understand where to find the courses in a system that's disconnected and confusing.

Through our \$2-million investment announced today, we're undertaking three important initiatives that make the system easier to use. First, information will be collected from all school boards on what adult education programs they offer. Then we'll publish that information on a public website. Right now, that information is not available in any systematic way. Second, tools will be developed for all adult education providers that will more consistently assess the essential skills of adult learners. Finally, we will make it easier for adult learners to have high school credits earned in other provinces recognized toward the Ontario secondary school diploma.

Our top priority is making sure that all adults have better access to existing programs and services. I know—we all know—that there's definitely more to be done, but these recent initiatives are exactly the types of planned policies we need. I had the opportunity to speak at CESBA, the Continuing Education School Board Administrators, this morning. They seemed to be very pleased that we were moving in this direction. They're taking part with us in these things.

Nous faisons des investissements judicieux, en commençant par jeter des bases solides, afin d'accroître les possibilités pour les apprenantes et apprenants adultes. Notre gouvernement s'est engagé envers l'éducation, depuis la petite enfance jusqu'à l'âge mûr.

We are reducing class sizes for our youngest students, emphasizing reading, writing and math with our youth, helping more teens graduate, and we are helping more adult learners succeed.

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

**Mr. Frank Klees (Oak Ridges):** In response to the statement by the Minister of Education, this is yet one more attempt by this government to deflect attention from the house of cards that successive Liberal Ministers of Education have been building.

Hiding behind dribbles of funding that are announced at great fanfare, this government continues to ignore the single most important issue facing education in Ontario today, and that is the updating of the basic education funding formula, a promise that Dalton McGuinty made and that he and three successive ministers have failed to address.

The Minister of Education is now the third minister in a row to ignore the appeals from every stakeholder in education to keep the Dalton McGuinty promise to update that funding formula. So I ask the minister: When you know that school boards across this province are in a funding crisis, why do you continue to ignore them?

Earlier today you announced \$2 million for adult education across Ontario. Clearly, those you charmed into ovation haven't taken the time to seriously consider what it is that you've announced. The amount of \$2 million over 72 boards translates into some \$27,000 per board. And what does it really mean? One more website for the government to advance your propaganda without addressing education and the fundamental work that you should be doing as a minister.

Your stakeholders, Minister, are abandoning you very rapidly. On October 20, 2006, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation held a press conference, and they held that press conference because they're concerned about the funding crisis facing school boards across this province. They challenged this minister and pointed out that school boards across this province are dipping into reserves and cutting programs and services from front-line education programs to meet this minister's program announcements that she and previous Ministers of Education failed to address with serious funding.

I want to quote Desiree Francis, the executive officer for the province of the OSSTF:

"We are now into the fourth year of the McGuinty government's mandate and this government has still not addressed fundamental problems with the education funding formula. Three successive Ministers of Education have acknowledged the problems, but none has made the changes necessary to ensure school boards have adequate stable funding to meet the needs of their students and communities."

Ms. Francis continues, "A substantial portion of all new education funding has been earmarked for specific ministry initiatives and has not helped boards cover the funding shortfall for core operating expenses. And even when the government did add \$600 million to the education budget last spring to bridge the funding gap for teacher salaries,"—which this government unilaterally negotiated—"it did so at the expense of the local priorities and learning opportunities grants. A total of \$511 million was removed from these grants and with the loss of this money, boards also lost what little flexibility they had to address local needs."

I continue with this quote. "Recently, Minister of Education Kathleen Wynne suggested that her government has taken a step-by-step approach to funding," and to changes in the funding formula. "We say, look again." Minister, this is the OSSTF speaking to you. "As Hugh Mackenzie's recent analysis of education funding shows, in the 905 area alone the government's funding shell game has meant that two of the largest urban public boards, Peel and Toronto, actually have less funding per student in 2006-07 than in 1997. The chair of the Durham board says his board must tap into their reserves for the \$5 million they need to meet the costs of special education. In Niagara, transportation funding is still based on pre-1998 data."

Minister, you are failing education in the province of Ontario. Your propaganda announcements are wearing thin with education stakeholders in this province. Why don't you get down to the work that you as Minister of Education should be doing? Look at the fundamental funding formula, bring the money to the table and ensure that boards can do the work that they are responsible to do.

**Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** With all due respect, Minister, the Tories used to dole out 1-800 numbers, and you Liberals dish out websites. It's "Have websites, will travel." I've got to say to the adult learners,

one wrong character and who knows where it might take you, just as a little reminder.

Once again the McGuinty government is faced with a serious crisis, and once again they respond not with a solution but with a website. Adult education in this province is in turmoil, and the cuts keep coming. The government responds by creating a website so people will know where to find adult education classes. Unfortunately, anyone naive enough to use it will find that there are fewer and fewer adult education classes to find.

The minister makes reference to the great work that the minister of post-secondary education is doing, and I want to say that we have already seen the government's sliding standards with regard to apprenticeship funding. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities issues an apprenticeship training tax credit, nominally for employers who train employees. Last year, we learned that Dell computers will receive the credit for staff in their Ottawa call centres. To quote the Ottawa citizen, "The province has generously included IT call centre workers in the apprenticeship plan, subsidizing their wages by allowing Dell to collect a tax credit of \$5,000 per employee for three years. The actual training period for the call centre workers is two to three weeks, Dell says."

That's the extent of the great training being provided by the minister of post-secondary education, and if he wants to elucidate for those of us whom he believes are wrong, he might just want to let us know how it is that the Ottawa Citizen is wrong in that regard.

Despite repeated promises, the McGuinty government has not fixed the education funding formula. They promised investments in adult education, but there's still no grant for adult general interest and seniors' programming across Ontario. This means these programs are being cancelled because boards don't have the funds to keep them going.

The Canadian Adult and Community Education Alliance notes that fees for general interest adult courses have risen 115% in the past five years, forcing many seniors to opt out.

Here is a short list of school boards that have made cuts to adult education in this past budget year: the French public board for southwestern Ontario; the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board; the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board; the Toronto District School Board. And when trustees of the Dufferin-Peel Catholic board refused to cut adult education, the McGuinty Liberals kicked them out, took them out of their jobs, and are now making these cuts themselves. Continuing education cuts in adult education in the Dufferin-Peel Catholic board: We're talking about \$927,000. These are the kinds of cuts that they are experiencing in Dufferin-Peel, and all we get for that is a website.

People for Education report a 17% drop in the number of continuing education programs over the last decade.

Jack Henshaw of Citizens for Lifelong Learning said that the Ontario Liberals rallied with seniors in 2003 to protect adult education from cuts by the previous Conser-

vative government. Three years later, these programs remain unfunded by the province, and seniors are again fighting to protect them, this time from the Liberals.

This government has no reason to have any pride whatsoever in its record on these matters.

I would prefer that the minister would come out and say, "We don't have the money. In fact, we're not going to raise the money, now or in the future. What it means is that we're going to be cutting programs across Ontario." I would rather you say that than simply say, "We're going to have a website so adult learners can hopefully find something, assuming the program still exists, so they can fit into some program somewhere in the province." That's not providing services.

Programs have been cut. They need programs, not a website to find out where programs still exist that they might be able to get into, assuming that the fee is not so high that they won't be able to afford it. You're not offering anything valuable or good to adult learners.

#### VISITORS

**Ms. Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale–High Park):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Now that there are more members in the House, I just want to introduce some wonderful young people who are here from the Miss G. project, who would love to see women's and gender studies in our high schools.

#### DEFERRED VOTES

##### BUDGET MEASURES ACT, 2006 (NO. 2)

##### LOI DE 2006 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES (N<sup>O</sup> 2)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant diverses mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2006 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1404 to 1414.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Mr. Sorbara has moved third reading of Bill 151, An Act to enact various 2006 Budget measures and to enact, amend or repeal various Acts / Projet de loi 151, Loi édictant diverses mesures énoncées dans le Budget de 2006 et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

#### Ayes

Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Peters, Steve
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Peterson, Tim
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra

Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Ramal, Khalil
Bountrogianni, Marie	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramsay, David
Bradley, James J.	Kular, Kuldip	Rinaldi, Lou
Brotten, Laurel C.	Kwintar, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Brownell, Jim	Marsales, Judy	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Matthews, Deborah	Sergio, Mario
Caplan, David	McGuinty, Dalton	Smith, Monique
Chambers, Mary Anne V.	McMeekin, Ted	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	McNeely, Phil	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crozier, Bruce	Meilleur, Madeleine	Van Bommel, Maria
Delaney, Bob	Mitchell, Carol	Watson, Jim
Dhillon, Vic	Mossop, Jennifer F.	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	Parsons, Ernie	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard	Zimmer, David

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

#### Nays

Arnott, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Marchese, Rosario	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Martel, Shelley	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Sterling, Norman W.
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Horwath, Andrea	Munro, Julia	Tory, John
Hudak, Tim	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John	Witmer, Elizabeth
Kormos, Peter	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakubski, John

**The Deputy Clerk (Ms. Deborah Deller):** The ayes are 54; the nays are 27.

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill be now passed and be entitled as in the motion.

#### DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader):** I believe we have unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes remembering the Montreal massacre.

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Mr. Bradley has asked for unanimous consent for each party to speak for up to five minutes on remembering the Montreal massacre. Agreed? Agreed.

**Hon. Sandra Pupatello (Minister of Economic Development and Trade, minister responsible for women's issues):** Geneviève Bergeron, Héléne Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte.

Today, we mark the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. We mourn the tragic and senseless loss of 14 talented young women who were killed simply because they were women.

We hold candlelight vigils and take part in awareness campaigns, offering hope to women and girls for whom abuse is a reality.

It's a day to reflect and remember all those who have died as a result of gender-based violence.



It's been 17 years since this incident and violence is still a very much a part of women's lives across the province. One in every four Ontario women, at some point, experiences abuse by her partner in her lifetime. Thirty-seven per cent of these occurrences are witnessed by children, who are more than likely to grow up to become abusers or victims in their own relationships.

Our government's working to improve these odds, to improve them through our domestic violence action plan. We're investing more than \$82 million over four years, exceeding our original target of \$66 million.

Over the past two years, we've worked with women's organizations, experts and those dedicated across the province, and I want to recognize their tireless efforts. Together, we've made progress.

More women and children fleeing from domestic violence will benefit from a \$2.5-million investment to help women's agencies strengthen counselling services.

#### 1420

In the new year, social housing providers will have the opportunity to participate in training sessions to increase their awareness of and sensitivity to the issues and challenges faced by abused women as they make their transition to new and safer lives. Our recently launched neighbours, friends and families initiative will help people recognize the signs and risk factors associated with violence against women and how to respond. That means it's all of our responsibility. More than 25 communities have confirmed their commitment to launch this campaign locally. Our goal is to have all communities across the province participate.

I encourage members of this Legislature to get involved as an individual, as a leader in your own community. Materials, including English and French public service announcements, are available from the neighbours, friends and families website, neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca. Only when we all work together against violence can we end it.

Our government has recently invested \$8.2 million to help women get skills they need to become financially independent. It includes employment training programs in the skilled trades and information technology. We're addressing the very root causes of violence against women by helping young people develop positive attitudes through our equalityrules.ca campaign that we launched this month. This campaign and website teaches girls and boys about healthy, equal relationships. It makes it clear that abuse in any form is not okay.

Since 1991, the YWCA has also distributed rose buttons on December 6 to mark the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. I encourage all members of this House to grab their button. I have rose buttons with me today and invite you to pick them up and demonstrate your commitment to ending violence against women.

Over the past few weeks, international campaigns and commemorations have shone the world spotlight on the sad reality of violence against women. We must be constant in our actions and diligent in our efforts year-

round. Today we were at Women's College with a number of people in that audience who take action every day to help end violence against women. I am pleased to say my government is taking action. And we won't rest until women can live free from violence. I believe all of us in this House believe it and are prepared to take action.

Mr. Speaker, when all of our members have spoken today, I'm hoping you'll ask for a moment of silence on behalf of these 14 women and also to celebrate the action that we're prepared to take and are taking to end violence against women.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo):** I'm very pleased to rise today on behalf of our leader, John Tory, and the members of the PC caucus to recognize this day, December 6, as the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada. Established in 1991 by the Parliament of Canada, this day coincides with the anniversary of the Montreal massacre, when a gunman murdered 14 young women at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal. These women were killed simply because of their gender.

This day of remembrance is important for all of us. It is a day to reflect on the tragic loss of the lives of these young women, young women with so much promise and on the cusp of life. However, it is also a day to reflect on the broader issue of violence against women, which we know impacts all females of all ages.

Today, I had the privilege of attending once again a commemorative service at Women's College Hospital that reminded all of us that today is a time to reflect on violence against women, not only here but around the entire world. It is a time to think about all the women and girls who live daily with the threat of violence. Certainly, as a mother myself, I know that I have warned my daughter always to be careful. It's something that you just do. It is a time to remember those whose lives have been affected by violence—and they are many. Finally, more important than anything else today, it is a time to take action—further action to do what we can to stop the violence.

In this regard, today the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario did take action. They took action in response to the need to stop violence in the workplace, including the death of Lori Dupont, the Windsor registered nurse who was murdered at her workplace. Today they released their policy statement, "Violence Against Nurses in the Workplace: A Zero Tolerance Approach."

This encourages all health care organizations to develop and adopt a set of policies that guide employees and their supervisors through a set of steps if they experience violence on the job. This, we know, is an issue that is not going to go away. We need to recognize that there is violence in the workplace and we need to take action to stop it, as this document suggests we do.

It is encouraging to see organizations such as the RNAO taking action to ensure that steps are taken to decrease the violence against women; however, there continues to be more work to be done. We know, when we look at the statistics, that women and girls continue to

make up the vast majority of victims of sexual assault. I was rather dismayed to hear from Chief Blair today that in Toronto the rate of domestic murders is up to seven this year.

Women continue to feel worried and concerned when they walk alone, when they walk in the dark or when they wait for public transit, as we saw recently at York University when it was reported last week that yet another female student had been sexually assaulted at gunpoint. Clearly, this is unacceptable. Obviously, this violence prevents women from making a full and positive contribution to their lives.

So we must work together to eradicate gender-based forms of violence. We need to educate the public about what they can do to help change attitudes and behaviours that contribute to the continuation of violent and abusive behaviour against women.

In that regard, I want to recognize the members of the Miss G. Project who are here today in our gallery. They have come today, December 6, because they want to draw a connection between the remembrance of these 14 women and the continued gender violence within our educational institutions and some of the causes. They have an idea that they feel would help prevent such violence. They want to establish a women's and gender studies course. They have been advocating for this to be included in the high school curriculum. We congratulate you for the actions you are taking to help stop violence against women.

Today in this House we not only remember the 14 women who were killed in Montreal, but we remember all of the women in Canada and throughout the world, including the Mennonite girls recently in Pennsylvania, killed because they were female.

I encourage my colleagues to take this to heart. I've stood in this House for what seems many years. I just ask you to seriously consider what you can do, and to consider your own behaviour and reaffirm—all of us—our commitment to take whatever steps we can personally and collectively to prevent violence against women and girls. It is only through our individual and collective actions that we are going to be able to decrease and hopefully eradicate violence against women.

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent in order that we can wear our buttons.

**The Speaker:** Mrs. Witmer has asked for unanimous consent so that we may wear the buttons. Agreed? Agreed.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East):** Seventeen years ago, 14 female students at l'École Polytechnique were murdered simply because they were women. This horrible event galvanized Canada's attention to a problem that has plagued women throughout the course of history.

The murdered women were promising young engineering students in their prime: Geneviève Bergeron, aged 21; Hélène Colgan, 23; Nathalie Croteau, 23; Barbara Daigneault, 22; Anne-Marie Edward, 21; Maud Haviernick, 29; Barbara Maria Klucznik, 31; Maryse Leclair, 23; Annie St-Arneault, 23; Michèle Richard, 21;

Maryse Laganière, 25; Anne-Marie Lemay, 22; Sonia Pelletier, 28; and Annie Turcotte, 21.

For their loved ones, the pain of the Montreal massacre will never be erased. Today, we remember those families and mourn their loss.

**1430**

The Montreal massacre led to promises of changes that step by step would eventually eradicate violence against women. Yet here in 2006, can we honestly say that we are in fact further ahead? Hundreds of Ontario women have died since 1989 at the hands of men who were strangers, but far more often by men with whom they once had close, personal relationships. Families lost their daughters, mothers, sisters, aunts, nieces, neighbours. Why? Because we as a society have not done a good enough job of changing the culture of male violence and misogyny that continues to plague women. Women still pay with their lives.

How shameful, how appalling it is to note that at a time when women's voices are needed more than ever, the Harper government cuts Status of Women Canada massively, a move that I myself have opposed by putting a resolution to the Legislature here at Queen's Park. As legislators, it is our duty to protect, in fact to amplify, these voices and prevent the perpetuation of violence against women at all costs.

Many times I have risen in this House to talk about the importance of getting at the root causes of violence against women. It's not that women's groups, service providers, coroners' juries and study after study haven't already instructed governments on what needs to be done. Ontario's coalition of women's groups has indicated a \$300-million package of emergency measures that would go a long way to free women trapped in and confronted by violence. A large part of the solution lies in the provision of affordable housing and child care, resettlement funds, meaningful employment and income supports that enable a woman to support her children, enabling women to leave a violent home—not just websites and pilot projects.

A key to erasing the violence is the will and determination to act, on all our parts, as both previous speakers have indicated. We must say no to delays in flowing the funding for programs and services women need to enable them to flee violence. We must strongly reject the Harper government's cuts to Status of Women Canada. We must say no to initiatives that languish on the back burner instead of being implemented. We must say no to attempts to downplay the severity and urgency of this life-and-death issue, which the World Health Organization describes as a global epidemic; and no to shelving reports and stalling legislation that call for stronger actions.

In fact, there is a private member's bill that I have on the books, Bill 45, which tackles workplace harassment and violence, and which has already been spoken about in today's remarks.

Alberta shows how seriously it deals with this problem as a province through a long list of items that it pays for to ensure that women can escape the violence and begin

to rebuild their lives. I've mentioned these measures in the House before. They include a number of different initiatives, including that women in abusive situations can get help 24 hours a day, seven days a week, through Alberta Works. All they need to do is call a toll-free number and, if eligible, the fund will cover them. It will cover them to get to safety, to set up a new household, and it actually covers their expenses to begin their new life.

Thankfully, there are many great people in our province working in the field who support this fight, groups like OAITH, METRAC, OFL and member organizations, the White Ribbon Campaign, the YWCA, sexual assault centres—the one in my own community does a lot of great work—and many others.

Today, we have members of the Miss G. Project here in the gallery who have already been recognized a couple of times. These young women see education as an important plank in ending the violence, and I agree. They're hopeful that they'll see women's studies included in the core curriculum of all secondary schools.

I can tell you that nothing would make me more proud than to see Ontario emerge as a leader, expanding its programs and services to the fullest extent to protect the lives of women and girls, and to see the kinds of programs that these young women are asking for actually implemented in our schools. I urge the women of the McGuinty government—the cabinet ministers and other women in that caucus—as well as their supporters to make sure that these kinds of initiatives actually do come to light in the province of Ontario.

In memory of the 14 women slain on December 6 and all the women who have been murdered before and since, let us all pledge to do more and do better in their names.

**The Speaker:** I ask all members and all our guests to stand for a period of silence.

*The House observed a moment's silence.*

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

## VISITOR

**Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the west gallery we have Mr. Sandy Singers, executive director of the food bank in Kingston and president of the Ontario Association of Food Banks. I would like to welcome him to Queen's Park.

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### ONTARIO POWER GENERATION AND HYDRO ONE

**Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is to the Premier. The Auditor General's report yesterday contained outrageous reports of improper

spending in a whole lot of places, including Hydro One and OPG.

In 2005, \$163 million worth of goods and services were purchased by employees of Hydro One with company credit cards, apparently without paperwork to back them up, according to the Attorney General. To put that in perspective, in order to spend \$163 million over the course of one year, people would have to be spending half a million dollars every day for 365 days on the company credit card.

We heard some words from you today professing concern about the taxpayers' money, but we don't see any obvious consequences when these kinds of scandals are unearthed.

My question is: Who is actually going to do something about the disrespect for the taxpayers' money, and when will there actually be some consequences from this kind of thing being unearthed in Auditor General reports like the one we saw yesterday? When are you going to do something?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** I'm looking forward to the time, but maybe I should not hold my breath, when the leader of the official opposition celebrates the fact that for the first time in the history of this province we have a government that invited the Auditor General to take a look into those areas which they refused to allow him into.

For years and years, the Auditor General said, "I want to get into children's aid societies, I want to get into hospitals, I want to get into school boards, I want to get into community colleges, I want to get into universities," and they said, "Tough, you're not getting in there. We don't want to know what's inside there." He said, "I want to get into long-term-care homes, I want to get into Hydro One, I want to get into OPG," and they said, "You're not getting in there under any circumstances."

What we have done is changed the law in Ontario and invited the Auditor General to take a look at exactly what is happening inside those places. We are pleased to have this information made available to us for the first time, and we look forward to acting on it.

**Mr. Tory:** I will stand in my place and say that I'm glad it's done. At the same time, I'm sure the Premier will agree with me that just doing that and just having the information is of little value to the taxpayers if you don't act on it. After the revelations we've seen in the last day or so, which result from weeks and months of information that has been made available to the ministers and to these corporations, we still don't have anybody taking responsibility for this. Whether it's the minister, whether it's the CEO, whether it's the Premier, nobody is taking responsibility. The message sent by that is that no one is responsible and there are no consequences for this abuse of taxpayers' money. That is what I'm asking about today.

We have one executive, who the media reports suggest is Mr. Parkinson, the CEO of Hydro One, who has \$50,000 in expenditures that were put through on a credit

card by his secretary, and that seems to allow it to escape normal public scrutiny. What I'm asking you is: What specific steps have you taken and will you take to get to the bottom of this and make sure there are consequences?

1440

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** One of the important opportunities that this new information that has been brought to the light of day creates is this: It's an opportunity for our government—and I'm sure the leader of the official opposition would want to share in this—to say to the people of Ontario, whether they're employed in the immediate public sector or the broader sector, "There's a new day in Ontario. There's more scrutiny, more transparency, more accountability and more responsibility. Everybody should get a sense of responsibility, and understanding that, we have to be very careful when it comes to how we deal with taxpayer money."

That's the important message that arises from this new opportunity we've created for the Auditor General. That's the message we're sending to Ontarians, wherever they happen to work, whether in the immediate or the broader public sector or in our government agencies. We are saying, "It's a new day. We've given the Auditor General the authority to find out exactly what you're doing. Start behaving responsibly. Start acting in the way that you know the people of Ontario expect you to act."

**Mr. Tory:** There's just one part missing from that very nice speech by the Premier, which is, "If you don't do it, there are going to be some consequences, and for those we know have done it, there are going to be consequences. You don't get away with it."

Now, this isn't the first time Mr. Parkinson's name has come up in this place. On April 4, eight months ago, we asked you and the then minister about a bonus that he got of \$500,000. On that day, all we were asking you to do was to provide us and the people of Ontario with the terms pursuant to which he got that bonus. You told us when we asked a few weeks later to let the people take the time to find out. We're here eight months later: no answer, no report, no accountability. When people see that the Premier of Ontario won't come forward with any explanation at all for a \$500,000 bonus, what are they to think, when they work in those corporations and in the government, about \$50,000, \$5,000 or \$500? That's what happens when you say one thing, you do another and you don't follow through.

What explanation do you have for Mr. Parkinson's bonus, his expenses and what are you going to do about it?

**Hon. Mr. McGuinty:** Let's hear what the Auditor General had to say in terms of who follows up on what recommendations. This is what he said about the Conservatives. In this report of 2003, he said: "It was apparent to us this year that there were far too many areas where prior year concerns—often going back four, five, six or even 10 years—had not been satisfactorily addressed.... There is no excuse for a lack of effective action after so many years have passed."

This is what he's saying now about our government. He said, "I have seen an improvement over the past three

years.... Of particular interest is the number of audits where the progress made to date is not only satisfactory but significant—action is being taken on all recommendations, with a number already having been substantially implemented."

When we get advice and recommendations from the Provincial Auditor, we act on them. Not only that, we increased the ambit of his authority so that he can look at more places, which the opposite side refused to allow him to enter into.

#### ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

**Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is to the Premier. I notice there's no answer on the specific question of today, so that's some follow-up.

I want to read two statements that have been made about the wait times website. The first is from your Minister of Health on October 24, 2005, when he described the website as "up-to-date," "reliable and accurate." On December 5, 2006, the Auditor General of Ontario, an independent officer of this Legislature, said the website was "misleading and ought to be taken with a grain of salt."

For people waiting and often suffering while they wait for tests and treatment, the issue has once again become the credibility of the Premier of Ontario, Dalton McGuinty. My question for the Premier is this: When it comes to wait times in Ontario, who should Ontarians believe? The Premier and the Minister of Health, who obviously have a huge interest in making things look good, or the Auditor General, an independent officer of this Legislature who says your wait time figures are misleading? Who should we believe?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

**Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** The people of Ontario should have confidence in the information that is gathered and presented to them. Indeed, the circumstances are very clear. Respectfully, we beg to differ with the approach that is on offer from the Auditor General. He suggests in his report that it's not appropriate to characterize all patients together for the same services. We beg to differ. We think it's crucial that we measure circumstances related to all patients and not create distinctions.

But on this point, we take everything the Auditor General says seriously. We're working with those experts we rely upon for advice to take a look at the suggestions that are on offer from the Auditor General. This is not work that has been taken lightly. It has involved people who are esteemed in their field, and they provided a lot of leadership around this, under the direction of Dr. Anne Keller from St. Michael's Hospital.

We recognize that there is a distinction in his approach from that which we've taken. We stand by ours; we think it's right. We agree that there are always opportunities to

look for improvement, and indeed we'll take the comments the Auditor General offers in that spirit and we'll be very—

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

**Mr. Tory:** The minister's answer betrays what part of the problem is here. The fact is that the Auditor General has caught the government red-handed giving Ontarians wait time information he described as misleading. He, too, gathered information and presented it to the public—not just you—and he's an independent officer of this Legislature who has no interest in advancing his own case. He says the wait time measurements vary from hospital to hospital, and he says the very thing you take such pride in talking about, that a patient is a patient, is a misleading way to calculate these wait times. Surely you can't compare someone who is in the hospital to get a test with someone waiting outside the hospital for a test and just average them all together.

The site was updated not long ago. It says that people in Peterborough are waiting 32 days for an MRI, but we know from the auditor's report that it could well be the case that they're waiting twice as long—64 days—for that test. The 90th percentile, in fact, is 53 days.

So can you tell us what is the actual wait time for an MRI in Peterborough, not based on your data that the Auditor General—

**The Speaker:** The question has been asked.

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** I say to the honourable member that he wants to pretend again that all patients are not together; that there are distinctions among patients. We think it's absolutely crucial that we present information to people that is understandable; not with 1,000 columns, but with the columns that reflect the very real circumstances.

If you are a patient in the Peterborough community seeking access to that hospital for the purposes of an MRI, we have collected data in a fashion that speaks very honestly to the circumstances for that patient group.

Again, we say that the honourable member likes to present a circumstance here and likes to characterize it in such a fashion that all those experts—led by Dr. Anne Keller and involving Dr. Alan Hudson, one of the foremost medical practitioners known to our country—have hosed the public. This is the suggestion the honourable member is offering.

I stand here as one who has accepted the judgment of experts in this area. We'll look very carefully at the advice the Auditor General offers, but we stand by our information. No matter how you measure it, 90th percentile—

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Final supplementary.

**Mr. Tory:** I can't believe that the minister actually believes and wants the House and, more importantly, the public to believe there is no difference between someone in the hospital waiting for a test and someone outside the hospital.

The Auditor General himself said the average for someone waiting for a test in the hospital is one day. You

will not find anybody outside the hospital who is waiting one day for a test, and when you average that in, you are, according to the Auditor General, misleading the public as to what the real time is that they have to wait for the test. So these are, by his admission, bogus numbers.

All we're asking you to do is tell the public the truth. If you want to break it out on the basis that all the patients should be shown, then show, as he suggests, how long the people in the hospital and the people outside the hospital are waiting, so that the majority, who are outside the hospital, will have a real number to look at. Why wouldn't you do that in the interest of fairly and accurately informing the public so that your website and the \$2-million propaganda ad campaign won't, as the Auditor General said, mislead the public? Why not?

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** The evidence is very clear that a 78% increase in access to MRIs in our province has resulted in lower wait times for the people of Ontario.

If the honourable member now wishes to change his stance—he stood in this place in the spring session and said, "You must offer these measurements on the basis of the 90th percentile," and we altered it to present it in the way that the honourable opposition leader himself suggested on that day.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** I need to be able to hear the Minister of Health. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** They don't like to hear it. But now he suggests, in a fashion that works well for him today, that we should alter that course.

The circumstances are clear. If we distinguish in the fashion that the honourable Auditor General has recommended—and we'll take a very close look at that—the conclusion will be drawn for the people of Ontario in a very clear fashion: Wait times are down for MRIs in Ontario.

1450

#### ONTARIO POWER GENERATION AND HYDRO ONE

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. The McGuinty government admits there is a problem with the corporate culture at Hydro One, a culture of entitlement. Indeed, there is a problem when the chief executive officer runs \$45,000 of his expenses through an assistant's credit card in order to escape accountability. Indeed, there is a problem when expense control measures are circumvented by the very person who's supposed to enforce them, the chief executive officer.

Premier, the chief executive officer sets the corporate culture. If you want to change the corporate culture at Hydro One, then I suggest you change the chief executive officer. When is the McGuinty government going to fire Mr. Parkinson, the chief executive officer?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** To the Minister of Energy.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy):** I am delighted that our government allowed the Auditor

General to go into Hydro One and OPG to look at their response. I'm also glad—they laugh across the way—that we applied freedom of information to Hydro One and OPG. I'm also glad that we provided for full salary disclosure at OPG and Hydro One. We're letting the sun shine in.

This government has a responsibility that it takes very seriously to protect the integrity of those two utilities. We will act according to the recommendations of the auditor in a way that we believe protects not only the interests of the corporation itself but, more importantly, the interests of all consumers in Ontario. That's our responsibility. We take it seriously. We will act appropriately and in a timely fashion.

**Mr. Hampton:** I think this rests with the Premier. The Premier says that he wants to promote open, transparent and accountable government. This is not the first time that the chief executive officer at Hydro One has abused his privileges. Only a short while ago he was caught taking joyrides on the Hydro One corporate helicopter. This is someone whose pay is way out of line with every other public utility in Canada. The McGuinty government says you scold him, but it would appear to me he is laughing in the face of the McGuinty government.

Premier, the average person on the street wouldn't put up with this conduct, this nonsense, for one minute. Why does the McGuinty government pander to Mr. Parkinson and his incredible greed? When is the McGuinty government going to do something? When are you going to fire Mr. Parkinson, the CEO At Hydro One?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** This government takes very seriously its responsibility with respect to Hydro One, as we did with OPG three years ago now when we had to make a number of changes there with respect to getting that company back to profitability, where I'm pleased to say it is today.

Our first responsibility is the integrity of the organization, and that integrity is vital to the interests of consumers in Ontario. This government and this Premier put their interests first and will act accordingly, and that is why we were pleased to receive, though disappointed in, the findings of the Auditor General. We'll deal with them in an appropriate fashion, in a timely way, to ensure that the integrity of the corporation and, more importantly, the confidence of Ontario consumers are maintained.

**Mr. Hampton:** Premier, this is someone who has sought to avoid scrutiny. This is someone who sought to avoid his expenses being covered by an audit process and by the board of directors at Hydro One. That is certainly a firing offence. This is someone who collects a huge pay packet, out of all proportion to everybody else who runs a public hydro utility in Canada. Yet the McGuinty government says with the uncovering of this information that you are not really going to do anything. This is somebody who's laughing in the face of hydro consumers across the province who can't pay their bill.

I'm going to ask the Premier again: We've heard you give the speech, Premier, but the talk is cheap. It's time to clean up the corporate greed over at Hydro One, and

you must start by getting rid of the person who leads the organization. When is the McGuinty government going to fire the chief executive officer, Mr. Parkinson, at Hydro One?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** This government has taken a number of steps to ensure the integrity of that corporation. In fact, the corporation has had three credit rating improvements in the last year. That being said, these recommendations from the auditor are very serious recommendations that we do not take lightly. We are going to deal with them. We began dealing with them yesterday afternoon upon receipt. We will deal with them in a responsible fashion. We will deal with them in a way that protects the interests of Ontario hydro consumers in every region of the province.

These issues are important. I am glad that we have the provincial auditor looking at companies like Hydro One and OPG. I am glad that we brought in freedom of information. I am glad that we brought in salary disclosure. We take our responsibility to act on these recommendations very seriously and we will do so in a way that protects the interests of all consumers in Ontario.

#### CT SCANS

**Mr. Howard Hampton (Kenora–Rainy River):** To the Premier—and it sounds like we're going to get more McGuinty speeches and no action—yesterday, the Auditor General revealed children are being exposed to massive doses of radiation when they go for CT scans. One CT scan for a child can equal up to 4,000 X-rays, eight times what adults face in CT scans, and children exposed to radiation are at greater risk of developing radiation-related cancers later in life. Despite the startling facts, proper CT scan settings for children were not used at least 50% of the time in Ontario hospitals.

The minister said yesterday that he's known about this for at least three months. My question is, why didn't your minister warn parents and children when he first found out about this three months ago?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** The honourable member has attributed a statement to me that is inaccurate. I think the procedure works this way: As a result of the legislation we passed and the circumstance where the Auditor General seeks to be involved with someone in the broader public sector, that is the engagement that is had.

I believe that the ministry may have been aware of this for approximately three weeks. Here are the steps that have been taken to address this. First off, we've seen that the Ontario Hospital Association, which has very clear responsibilities, put out a release that said, as the Auditor General noted in his report, that "hospitals we visited had general radiological policies based on the ALARA"—as low as reasonably achievable—"principle."

We are concerned, of course, with the detail of the report. Further to the work that the Ontario Hospital

Association has been involved in, we struck as of September a safety committee which will be reporting in 2007. Further, my deputy minister has called together three groups that have primary responsibility here: the Ontario Hospital Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, and the College of Medical Radiation Technologists of Ontario. I can assure all members that we will not rest until we've enhanced the capacity to provide—

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

**Mr. Hampton:** The Auditor General says that 94% of referring paediatricians underestimated the amount of radiation children faced when getting CT scans and that hospitals performing pediatric CTs did not keep records of young patients receiving multiple CT scans.

Minister, you may want to change your tune today. You said yesterday you had known about the situation for three months but you did not warn the public until the Auditor General blew the whistle yesterday.

I say this to the Premier: Between the day the minister found out unsuspecting children were being exposed to dangerous levels of radiation and yesterday, when the Auditor General blew the whistle, can the Premier tell us how many children underwent CT scans in that three-month period of time?

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** The work of the Auditor General relates to three particular hospitals where his staff conducted an investigation. Over the course of several months, one anticipates that the Auditor General and his staff were in touch with those hospitals. So awareness in the hospitals in particular where the concerns had been raised has been longstanding. One assumes that appropriate action was taken on their part.

The ministry's response to this has been related to drawing to the attention of and ensuring that those who are responsible for these actions—those are the groups I mentioned earlier, the Ontario Hospital Association and the two colleges, recognizing that the staff people who are administering this work are members of regulated health professions. Accordingly, my deputy minister is bringing those parties together, and as we move forward through the work of the safety committee which had been struck as of September 2006, Ontario will be in a position to have moved forward with guidelines that do not exist in any other jurisdiction. We depend upon these front-line health care providers, who are regulated; we depend upon the Ontario Hospital Association for the actions that are taking place in their environments. Through the work of our deputy minister, we are ensuring that they move—

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Final supplementary.

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**Mr. Hampton:** The Auditor General indicated yesterday that the Minister of Health and his officials knew in September about these dangerous levels of radiation. But we shouldn't be surprised. The Auditor General showed that the minister's wait-time ads can't be trusted either.

Now your reporting on patient safety is the issue. Over one million people had CT scans last year. Many of them

were children, and the Auditor General says that 20% of the diagnostic imaging tests, including MRIs and CTs, are not even clinically appropriate, which means that you may have had up to 200,000 getting CT scans when they may not have needed them.

Patients deserve to be told about the risks involved in this procedure. Can the minister tell us: What action have you taken to notify all of those parents whose children were exposed to unsafe levels of radiation this fall? Have you taken any steps to explain the health risks?

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** First off, I will say to the honourable member again, with respect to the notice period, that he is inaccurate, and he is informing the House even after he has been told of that. I think that is a very, very important point.

We have created a law that allows the Auditor General to look harder, to go further and to highlight areas of concern. He has done that in a very instructive way, and in fact he was involved with those three particular hospitals through his staff. Further to that, we're working, through the auspices of our deputy minister and through a committee that has been struck to look at the safety of the administration of radiation services, to ensure that Ontario, going forward, has a standard no other province can point to.

The honourable member speaks about clinical appropriateness. I can say too that through the expert committee, which is chaired by Dr. Anne Keller, we're working very vigorously. We're proud that we've enhanced access to these diagnostic services. We agree that these regulated health professionals must be doing their work in concordance with all of the best guidance and regulations. That that has not occurred in every instance—

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

#### ONTARIO POWER GENERATION AND HYDRO ONE

**Mr. John Tory (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is for the Premier. We've heard today, again, a lot of words about the taxpayers' money and protection of the taxpayers' money. We heard the minister talking about the integrity of the corporations over in the power generation and distribution sector being maintained. We haven't heard something that's equally important: about the integrity of the broader public sector and any shred of accountability we can see being exercised here. The taxpayers are simply fed up with hearing these kinds of statements that say, "We understand, we feel your pain and we know why you're upset," and then that is followed by precisely nothing being done about it.

So my question is very simple: What specific steps have you taken to bring forward the report we asked for eight months ago about the bonus that Mr. Parkinson received for half a million dollars, without explanation, and what specific steps are going to be taken about the \$50,000 in expenses we heard about in the Auditor General's report yesterday? Specifically, what are you going to do about it?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** To the Minister of the Energy.

**Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy):** Specifically, I met yesterday afternoon, upon receipt of the report, with the chair of Hydro One. I meet with the chair on a monthly basis. In addition, I have reviewed all of the auditor's recommendations. A number of them have been acted upon already. There is more to do, and we will do that.

In addition, I should point out, since the Leader of the Opposition did reference OPG, that I have also had a meeting with Mr. Epp—albeit over the telephone. A number of the auditor's recommendations have been acted upon. There are a number left to do.

I have also directed Mr. Epp and Ms. Burak to go beyond the auditor's recommendations and look at a number of other areas that I think we should be looking at in this context. I will report to the House in the fullness of time with respect to the resolution of those issues.

Finally, we continue to deal with the matters on an ongoing basis.

**Mr. Tory:** I would say respectfully to the Premier that when he chooses not to stand in his place and answer these direct questions with respect to something that goes right to the accountability that the Premier of Ontario must show for every dollar of taxpayers' money, every ministry, every policy, every corporation in the control of his government, it shows a failure to take accountability.

I would ask the Premier this: What is wrong with this course of action that you could have taken yesterday, if not long before? Instruct them to tell us now the basis upon which the bonus was paid. They should have known it when they paid it. Instruct them now to cut down on the number of corporate credit cards. Instruct them now to tighten the rules about the use of those credit cards. Instruct them now to impose sanctions on those who abuse the taxpayers' money and abuse those credit cards, and instruct them now to show some leadership in sanctioning the people who have abused the taxpayers' money and broken the rules. Why don't you tell them to do that today?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** I wish the Leader of the Opposition had been here about three years ago. He might have told the previous government not to give Michael Gourley \$3.7 million in untendered contracts. He might have told the previous government not to give Paul Rhodes \$335,000 for strategic communications advice. OPG might not have been left in a bankrupt position. When we came in, we turned it around. It's profitable and giving money back to this province and to the rate-payers of Ontario.

This Premier has taken a leadership role in getting those companies back in order and in shape. We acknowledge that there is more to do. What did they leave? They left a bankrupt public utility. They left a utility that was bleeding \$100 million a month. It's now making money. Hydro One has had its credit rating increased three times under this Premier's leadership.

There's more to do; we're going to do it. And, by the way, we're going to deal with contracts that your government signed a few years ago. That's what we're going to deal with.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Order. Stop the clock. Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Member for Simcoe–Grey. The member for Nickel Belt is waiting patiently to place her question.

#### HEALTH CARDS

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a question for the Premier. The Auditor General expressed [*inaudible*] yesterday about the lack of controls to ensure that only eligible Ontarians have OHIP cards. He said that there are more than “10,000 extra cards in ... regions that border the United States.” Secondly, that almost 12,000 OHIP cards were used in different regions across the province within a very short period of time, “possibly indicating that health card numbers were being used inappropriately.” Thirdly, that although the Ministry of Health's fraud program branch is staffed with OPP officers and fraud examiners, the branch had no mandate to conduct fraud audits and no access to health records that would allow them to investigate suspicious cases.

Premier, OHIP cards provide vital access to Ontario's health care services. What are you doing to protect them?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** To the Minister of Health.

**Hon. George Smitherman (Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I do want to thank again the Auditor General for the excellent work. I think that the OHIP system is one that has been the subject of lots of reports over time. It's large, and accordingly, it's very, very helpful to have that kind of a perspective.

I think that there is some progress to report. While there is more to be done, of course, over the course of the year or so that the investigation by the Auditor General was ongoing, the ministry has worked very, very vigorously to take those excess cards out of circulation. I can report to the honourable member that to date, 250,000 cards have been determined to be ineligible and therefore not active. As of October 1, 2006, the total number of valid and active health cards was 12.52 million, while Ontario's population is 12.69 million.

There is more work to do on this file. With the benefit of the report from the Auditor General, we will continue to move that forward. I think we've made good steps, and I want to thank the people from the ministry, who have been very diligent in this regard.

**Ms. Martel:** The question was, what is the government doing to protect OHIP cards?

Let me raise a very specific case with the Premier. A letter was sent to the Ministry of Health a week ago from Joanne Bruyere of Fort Francis. Joanne says, “A few weeks ago, I received an envelope in the mail from a company by the name of Medtronic [which included] two identification cards that state I received a pacemaker.”



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Joanne continues, “I called the company (and found out) the doctor who did the surgery ... the hospital it was done at ... (in Montreal, Quebec) ... and the date of the surgery.

“All the information on the card is my personal information, the only problem I have is I have never been to Montreal, have never seen this doctor and I don’t have a pacemaker.”

Joanne says, “I believe someone may be using my OHIP card fraudulently.”

She’s never lost her card; it’s never been stolen. If things are getting better, how is it that Joanne’s personal health information was so abused?

**Hon. Mr. Smitherman:** The honourable member has rather a little more experience than me at the presentation of information related to the health care system. But what I would say is that it is not appropriate ever to talk about an individual Ontarian’s circumstances; that is, about the protection of personal information. If the honourable member would like to await a response in terms of the particular circumstances, we will work through that, but let me give one example which I think is noteworthy in terms of the verification work that the Auditor General called for.

In fairly recent order, we’ve gone from 200 to 10,000 letters per week that are going out to Ontarians verifying the information we have on file for them. I did suggest in my earlier answer that good progress has been made, but I agree that there is more work to be done. The report from the Auditor General gives us good advice in that regard and the people of Ontario should know that we’ll be addressing it on point.

#### INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

**Mr. Khalil Ramal (London–Fanshawe):** My question is for the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. The city of London has grown rapidly to become one of the largest municipalities in southwest Ontario. Many of my constituents have been residents and have seen it grow. They know that infrastructure investment is a particular priority there.

They know that the roads and highways that we drive on are essential to moving goods and keeping the economy strong. They know that universities and colleges that students in my riding attend are crucial for making sure that we are the smartest and the brightest we can be. They know that hospitals need to be up to date and that wait times decrease so that we stay healthy and have the best health care in the country. They know that these are the types of infrastructure investments we need in London and around the province.

London was neglected by the previous government. The Tory government didn’t see infrastructure as a priority. They didn’t see London as a priority. What is the McGuinty government doing to make sure that London is getting the infrastructure investment—

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** The question’s been asked. The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal.

**Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader):** Not only has the question been asked, but this member, the member from London–Fanshawe, is a tireless advocate for more investment in his riding and more investment in his city. He’s right, infrastructure is a priority and previous governments should have invested more. But Premier McGuinty knows, and I know, that infrastructure investment is key to the region, to southwestern Ontario and the city of London. That’s why we’ve developed a plan. That’s why we’ve developed ReNew Ontario, a \$30-billion infrastructure investment plan.

Hospital projects in the London area are a particular priority and are moving quickly; specifically, the redevelopment project at St. Joseph’s acute ambulatory care facility; a new state-of-the-art facility for diagnostic radiology and nuclear medicine imaging at the London Health Sciences Centre; the renovations at the St. Joseph’s hospital for a surgical and diagnostic imaging centre. The University of Western Ontario has received almost \$20 million to upgrade and build new facilities and there is our program to invest in southern Ontario highways, \$3.4 billion to help people and goods to get to and from—

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Supplementary.

**Mr. Ramal:** Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that the McGuinty government is listening to the people of London and building new hospitals, roads and highways, and making sure our universities and colleges are—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker:** Order. Member for London–Fanshawe.

**Mr. Ramal:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker—and making sure our universities and colleges have the buildings and equipment they need.

Since 2003, the people of London are finally seeing huge investments in their community. While I appreciate that London is receiving new investments in infrastructure, how can I demonstrate to my constituents that we are making real progress? They want more investments made in recreation centres so that young men and women have places to go to play sports, stay off the streets and maintain a healthy lifestyle. They want more investments made in our vulnerable people so that women and children have a place to go when they are in need. They want more investments made in their libraries, children centres and many places. Minister, you can tell my constituents what the McGuinty government is doing to make—

**The Speaker:** The question has been asked. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** The member from London–Fanshawe has so much drive and enthusiasm when it comes to demanding more for his constituents, and I appreciate that this member is advocating for some of the most vulnerable in our society.

I know that it’s important that we invest in health care, whether it is a \$5-billion health care program, a \$10-

billion program for schools, \$11 billion for transportation, but he knows, just as I do, that targeted investments in local communities yield big results. To that end, my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has made sure we've invested in affordable housing projects in London to help those London residents into a new home. My colleague the Minister of Health Promotion has made sure we've invested in recreation and sports centres so that our children have places to play and go after school. My colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services has invested in treatment centres for children so that our most vulnerable can get the help they need. These are the types of targeted investments that make a huge difference in the lives of people.

#### CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton):** Speaking of the Minister of Children and Youth Services, this question is for her. Yesterday the minister acknowledged that she first learned her department traded kids for cars in October. She also indicated her deputy minister knew of the AG's report in September. That raises a lot of questions about this minister's competency. She stood by when children's aid societies spent \$60,000 on luxury cars, \$2,500 on gym memberships and \$150 on car washes. She abandoned risk assessments, cancelled financial reviews, ignored quarterly reports, and now we learn from the minister, who is supposedly responsible, that she learned a whole month after her deputy did of the misappropriation of tax dollars to protect Ontario's most vulnerable kids.

Who's responsible for her department? Is it her or is it her deputy?

**Hon. Mary Anne V. Chambers (Minister of Children and Youth Services):** The member from Nepean–Carleton is just a little bit too sensational and a little bit less than accurate in what she's saying. Let me tell you what we're doing—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Order. I need to be able to hear the minister respond. Minister?

**Hon. Mrs. Chambers:** I actually insisted on receiving a draft copy of the report early in October and got personally involved in that right away. That's why our action plans in my ministry and, in fact, for children's aid societies actually reflect activities that are already underway, some of which have already been completed.

One of the action items in my ministry is the creation of a new accountability office, which will be in place in January and will monitor whether children's aid societies are meeting their legislative requirements for the care and protection of children and ensure corrective action is taken as needed. That office will also assess and report on agency—

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

**Ms. MacLeod:** Too bad we couldn't have a little bit more compassion and a little less condescension from the

minister. It's about what she wasn't doing then, not about what she's professing to do now. This minister is either responsible for her department or not. By all accounts, she was asleep at the switch or she just didn't care that her department was grossly mishandling tax dollars meant for children at risk. The minister has a lot to answer for.

After all this time, since September when her deputy minister found out and October since the minister herself found out, can the minister inform this House who has been held responsible for the shameful antics in her department? Who has been fired? Who will stand up and take responsibility? Or is she waiting for someone else to stand up and take responsibility? Let us know, Minister.

1520

**Hon. Mrs. Chambers:** Let me tell you a little bit more about what my ministry is doing. I'm really very pleased that my ministry's actions actually go well beyond what the Auditor General has asked us to do. We're accepting and implementing all of his recommendations, and he has actually expressed satisfaction with the fact that we are doing all of what we are doing.

The accountability office will also provide my ministry staff with the training and tools they need to provide better oversight and create a new culture of continuous improvement for CASs. We're also requiring children's aid societies to meet higher standards, as non-discretionary as those of the Ontario public service for its own employees and programs in such areas as the procurement of goods and services, travel, meals and other expenses, hospitality, and the management of fleet vehicles; and to conduct an independent assessment of the fleet requirements of children's aid societies, so that where less expensive alternatives exist, CASs will be directed to relinquish vehicles as quickly and economically as possible—

**The Speaker:** Thank you. New question?

**Ms. Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East):** My question is for the Premier. Premier, yesterday's Auditor General report is a scathing indictment of your failure to stand up for Ontario's children, who you are supposed to be protecting. There was no government oversight while children's aid society executives spent a billion dollars and at-risk children waited too long for help. Your government ignored reports, cut reviews and failed to uphold its duty to oversee the spending practices of children's aid societies. You claim to be taking action, but the auditor says that you failed to act on his last report on child welfare six years ago.

Children cannot wait another six years, Premier. Will you ask the Auditor General to conduct another audit of children's aid societies and the child welfare system next year, so that the people of Ontario are able to judge for themselves whether corrective measures have actually been taken by your government?

**Hon. Dalton McGuinty (Premier, Minister of Research and Innovation):** To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

**Hon. Mrs. Chambers:** The member from Hamilton East probably wasn't here for my statement yesterday, so

I will just remind her that the statement actually included a comment that I am also inviting the Auditor General to undertake a follow-up audit of these four CASs in 2007 to assess the progress that has been made.

There is no question that the findings and recommendations in the Auditor General's report represent a real opportunity for everyone involved in the child welfare and protection system to work together to strengthen it. There is an attitudinal change that is occurring, an understanding that this is a new day, a new era, and that there are higher standards to be met. Let me just—

**The Speaker:** Response?

**Hon. Mrs. Chambers:** I will stop here. In the supplementary, I'll speak a little bit more about what we're doing.

**Ms. Horwath:** The last-minute CAS damage control office that the minister announced, quite frankly, doesn't go far enough, in our opinion. Your government has to live up to its responsibilities under the new law to protect and care for children at risk. Vulnerable children are being left in harm's way because of what observers call lackadaisical care, abysmal record-keeping, weak oversight and questionable spending on cars and holidays.

You've misguidedly said no to Ombudsman oversight of children's aid societies, but will you definitely ask the Auditor General to conduct another audit of children's aid societies and the whole child welfare system to ensure your government's complicity won't put vulnerable children at risk again?

**Hon. Mrs. Chambers:** I'm realizing that the member from Hamilton East is not really listening to the answers, but I will repeat some of them.

One of the things that I'm proudest of is the fact that it was our government that extended the powers of the Auditor General so that we could understand what was going on in places like the children's aid societies, and also that we would be able to make sure that we're taking the appropriate actions to ensure that there is a higher standard of care and a higher standard of efficiency and effective management of taxpayers' dollars in this sector. So I will certainly look forward to a follow-up audit of children's aid societies and the child protection system next year.

#### EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

**Mr. Jim Brownell (Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh):** My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, I often hear from my constituents how difficult it is to access government services. We all know that you can look in the blue pages in any phone book, but for most people it's hard to find the numbers they need, and even if they do find the right numbers to call, they don't always find what they're looking for. Consider how this could be especially difficult for newcomers to Ontario or those individuals whose first language may not be English or French. In particular, many job seekers are unaware of the variety of employment and training services offered by our gov-

ernment and are unsure of where to go or how to access them. Minister, to solve this problem, you recently launched Employment Ontario, Ontario's employment and training network. My question is, how will Employment Ontario benefit job seekers in my riding, and in particular those who are newcomers to Ontario?

**Hon. Christopher Bentley (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities):** I'd like to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh for his hard work in trying to make the system more usable for the people who need it, whether they're businesses or individuals. Employment Ontario is the place to start when you don't know where to start. It brings together the 470 different service providers in 900 locations across the province of Ontario and ensures that no matter where you are, you can find the services easily. You access them through a 1-800 number and they will provide you the services in the community—such as Cornwall—dealing with everything from simple job advice to literacy services, upgrading services, enhanced skills training or apprenticeship services. If you happen to be an employer, you can access it through a website—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Michael A. Brown):** Order. Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Minister.

**Hon. Mr. Bentley:** I know there are people in the parties opposite who don't really care about making the system user-friendly, but at the end of the day it's not about the programs, it's about the workers and the businesses that need to access them, and that's why we've brought in Employment Ontario. We're making government work for the people of Ontario, not for the government.

**Mr. Brownell:** We know that over 70% of all new jobs in Ontario require some form of post-secondary education or training. In an age where technological innovation is one of the key sources of productivity gains, Ontario needs an increasingly skilled workforce to attract business and compete for the jobs that will help the province prosper. In the global race for talent, employers are constantly looking for skilled workers who will keep their companies competitive in their sector. Minister, how does Employment Ontario help individuals who may not already have the education or training necessary to compete for the types of jobs that Ontario needs to sustain economic growth?

**Hon. Mr. Bentley:** For example, if a worker in Cornwall is looking for job advice, they might not know about the Job Connect office in Cornwall and the additional funds we've put in there to support enhanced services. So they call the Employment Ontario number and tell them where they're looking and what issue they're looking for. Or if they're looking for pre-apprenticeship programs, they might not know about the announcement that was just released by the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh about enhanced services there. You can call Employment Ontario. Or if they're looking for academic upgrading, for example—one of the additional almost 5,000 people in the province of Ontario who will

benefit from this—where would they start? They can call Employment Ontario and they'll be referred on. Or if they're looking at the great programs at St. Lawrence College's campus in Cornwall, they can phone Employment Ontario and be directed to exactly what they need in the way they need it. That is the way that the member from Stormont–Dundas–Charlottenburgh is making government programs work for the people in his constituency.

#### ONTARIO POWER GENERATION AND HYDRO ONE

**Mr. John Yakabuski (Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke):** My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, earlier this year when you were asked by people driven into unemployment by your government about the escalating rates of electricity that you guys have been responsible for, your answer was to get some red wine and some warm blankets. Now, what are you telling these people when the auditor is telling us that the CEO of Hydro One was able to avoid the board of directors scrutiny of his expenses by having them put on his secretary's credit card, which certainly gives the appearance of trying to launder one's expenses through someone else: over \$50,000 being put on a secretary's credit card because he knew that if he put it on his, he would have to have the scrutiny of the board.

What are you telling working families and people out of work in Ontario about your electricity policies, and what are you going to do about what happened at Hydro One, with \$50,000 of expenses put on a secretary's credit card?

1530

**Hon. Dwight Duncan (Minister of Energy):** First of all, I'll tell the citizens of Ontario that the price of electricity is lower now than when we took office. We'll tell them that first. That's from the Independent Electricity System Operator.

I indicated earlier in the House that we take these matters very seriously. That's why we asked the auditor to go in and look at Hydro One and OPG. That's why we brought in freedom of information, unlike the government you were part of. That's why we provided for salary disclosure.

There is more work to be done. I have met with the chairs of both OPG and Hydro One. We will act in the interests of consumers in this province, in a timely and responsible fashion, as I did when we moved to clean up the mess your government left at OPG. These issues are complex. They seem easy on the face. We pledged to the people of Ontario that we would manage the electricity system in a responsible fashion. We will address these matters in both a responsible and a timely—

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

**Mr. Yakabuski:** Minister, the electricity rates paid by working families and those forced out of work by your government in this province are up some 50% since you took office. So we'll get that one straight right off the bat.

You talked about disclosure. Earlier this year, you talked about disclosure with regard to why the CEO of Hydro One was paid a \$500,000 bonus. We have heard nothing on that. Now we would like some disclosure with regard to your quote to CP yesterday that heads could roll if you don't get some answers. Whose heads at Hydro One are you talking about? Certainly not the poor secretary who was just doing what she was told. I'd like to know whose head is going to roll at Hydro One if you don't get some answers, and when might we expect the answers?

**Hon. Mr. Duncan:** This government will act in the best interests of Ontario consumers, in a timely and responsible fashion. With regard to the options the government has, there are a number, and we're looking at them. That's why I met with the chair of Hydro One; that's why I met with the chair of OPG.

One of the things this government is most proud of is that we took a virtually bankrupt OPG, and now it's making money for the people of Ontario and paying down the unfunded liability to the tune of \$1.1 billion this year. Hydro One has had three credit rating increases this year alone. We are going to continue to make progress. We have begun to address the auditor's report, and we will take appropriate steps, in a timely fashion, to address the issues that have been raised by the Auditor General in his report.

#### MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

**Mr. Michael Prue (Beaches–East York):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On October 24, I submitted a petition to this House, in your direction, about the sorry state of affairs in the city of Vaughan, the so-called city above Toronto, whose residents today are calling it the city above the law.

Vaughan citizens have begged you through the petition, through letters, through people coming into your office and meeting with your staff, and in front of news conferences to investigate years of allegations of suspected wrongdoing in their city.

On November 24, one of your staffers met with a delegation who outlined their concerns. They then held a press conference, and your staffers were at that press conference here at Queen's Park.

Minister, will you come to the aid of these citizens and order an investigation, as you have been petitioned to do?

**Hon. John Gerretsen (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I thank the member very much for the question. Let me just say that we're very pleased that the duly elected council for the city of Vaughan was sworn in the other day. Elections were held there, just like they were everywhere else in the province. It was a very close election for the position of mayor. A recount was done, and the result speaks for itself.

As the member well knows, the municipal clerks are responsible for the administration of the municipal elections. We're very pleased that all of the numerous elections that took place across the province of Ontario,

many of them in tight races, were conducted in as expert a fashion as they were. I think we should congratulate the municipal clerks clear across this province for running really, truly democratic elections, allowing the people of the various municipalities to state who they want to serve in councils for the next four years, and we're pleased with that.

**Mr. Prue:** I think the minister must have had the wrong briefing note. I'm not talking about the election; I'm talking about their request to investigate alleged wrongdoings in the city of Vaughan.

We've heard about years of alleged questionable practices in the city of Vaughan. The recent municipal election was marred with nastiness, yes, but that's not what this question is about. Vaughan citizens have elected a new mayor and I'm glad that she has been sworn in, but Mayor Jackson wants to get to the bottom of the allegations. The number one thing she said on being sworn in is that she wants your help to hold a public inquiry into what has happened in her city.

Minister, my question is very simple: Will you respond to the mayor of Vaughan and the good citizens of that city today and order an immediate investigation into their city's affairs?

**Hon. Mr. Gerretsen:** As the member has already stated, a member from my ministry met with the delegation, and it was attended by members of my staff as well. We're looking at the petition, we're studying it currently, but as the member also knows, the individual who had a lot to say about what was going on apparently in Vaughan, according to some individuals, is now the duly elected mayor of Vaughan, and obviously she can conduct whatever investigations she wants internally, to look at any matter as it relates to that municipality. We believe that's the best way to go about it, but we will certainly, in our ministry, assist however we can in order to make the city of Vaughan function as the citizens of Vaughan obviously would want it to.

### TOURISM

**Ms. Monique M. Smith (Nipissing):** My question is for the Minister of Tourism. Minister, judging by the cold weather and snow that we've seen over the last few days—and certainly we've had a lot of snow in North Bay—it feels like winter has certainly arrived. I know that a lot of my constituents are looking forward to their upcoming holidays and wondering what new and exciting events and activities they can partake of during our vacation time.

In my riding of Nipissing, there is an abundance of great things for residents and tourists to enjoy. I'd like you to share, Minister, what other events and attractions are available for people travelling throughout northern Ontario over our winter months.

**Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader):** That was a great question, and I have some information for the member right here.

Northern Ontario is full of exciting and enjoyable things to do in the winter months. For people travelling through northern Ontario on snowmobiles or looking for cross-country skiing, there's an abundance of trails throughout the north and throughout the entire province for people to get out and enjoy.

In addition, the north is host to many winter festivals and events. Visitors can get their hands on some of the greatest snow on earth at the Ontario Winter Carnival Bon Soo in Sault Ste. Marie or jump back in time at Fort William Historical Park in Thunder Bay for the delightful recreation of Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*.

Tours of the sugar bush, horse-drawn hayrides, ice climbing, snowshoeing, polar bear watching and outdoor adventures are around every corner of the north. Hidden gems of winter enjoyment are found throughout northern Ontario.

### PETITIONS

#### DAIRY INDUSTRY

**Mr. Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** I have just been handed this petition with about 2,000 names on it from many ridings in Toronto here. It's to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas citizens should have the right to make informed decisions about how, where and by whom our food is grown and produced; and

"To prohibit the availability of raw milk to those of us who take responsibility for our own health and inform ourselves about how to best do that is a basic violation of our right to make informed choices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to:

"—have Minister Ramsay return all the equipment, documents and other items removed from Glencolton Farm; and

"—have the government agree to be financially liable for the personal property of cow shareowners; and

"—agree in writing that Glencolton Farm is to be free to carry on its service to the cowshare owners until and unless all of the issues have been dealt with in court or in the Legislative Assembly or Parliament of Ontario."

Again, these came from and around Toronto.

1540

#### TUITION

**Mr. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I have a petition here signed by a number of people from communities up around my riding, from Kapuskasing, the Mattice area, and it reads as follows:

"To Stop Tuition Fee Hikes and Improve Access and Quality In Post-Secondary Education

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

“Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

“Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

“Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students’ call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

“—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

“—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

“—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students.”

I’ve signed that petition.

#### REGULATION OF ZOOS

**Ms. Jennifer F. Mossop (Stoney Creek):** I would like to present a petition that says:

“Whereas Ontario has the weakest zoo laws in the country; and

“Whereas existing zoo regulations are vague, unenforceable and only apply to native wildlife; and

“Whereas there are no mandatory standards to ensure adequate care and housing for zoo animals or the health and safety of animals, zoo staff, the visiting public or neighbouring communities; and

“Whereas several people have been injured by captive wildlife and zoo escapes are frequent in Ontario; and

“Whereas these same regulatory gaps were affirmed recently by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his annual report;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support MPP David Zimmer’s bill, the Regulation of Zoos Act.”

I have literally hundreds if not thousands of signatures here. I am happy to put my name on the petition.

#### SCHOOL FACILITIES

**Ms. Lisa MacLeod (Nepean–Carleton):** “Whereas Longfields and Davidson Heights in south Nepean are some of the fastest growing communities ... in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board has voted to authorize the final design phases for a grade

7 to 12 school to serve the Longfields and Davidson Heights communities; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has lifted a three-year moratorium on school closings in order to make way for new educational facilities;

“We, residents of Nepean–Carleton, petition the Parliament of Ontario to ensure that the Ottawa–Carleton District School Board continues with plans to build a new grade 7 to 12 school no later than autumn of 2008 to serve the Longfields and Davidson Heights communities.”

I support this and affix my signature.

#### REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition from Anne Deveau of Levack, Ontario. It’s been signed by a number of people in my riding. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government were elected based on their promise to rebuild public services in Ontario;

“Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services has announced plans to close the Rideau Regional Centre, home to people with developmental disabilities, many of whom have multiple diagnoses and severe problems that cannot be met in the community;

“Whereas closing the Rideau Regional Centre will have a devastating impact on residents with developmental disabilities, their families, the developmental services sector and the economies of the local communities;

“Whereas Ontario could use the professional staff and facilities of the Rideau Regional Centre to extend specialized services, support and professional training to many more clients who live in the community, in partnership with families and community agencies;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government to keep the Rideau Regional Centre open as a home for people with developmental disabilities and to maintain it as a ‘centre of excellence’ to provide specialized services and support to Ontarians with developmental needs, no matter where they live.”

I’ve affixed my signature to this.

#### BOMBARDIER IN THUNDER BAY

**Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan):** I have a petition with over 2,000 signatures on it from Thunder Bay and surrounding area which reads as follows:

“Whereas the previous government of Canada made a commitment of approximately \$200 million to fund the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) contract for subway cars to be built at Bombardier in Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has confirmed its commitment to fund approximately \$200 million as the provincial share of the TTC contract at Bombardier in Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas this contract will create approximately 300 jobs for five years in the city of Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas our government should be committed to supporting the use and expansion of mass transit to benefit our environment and our economy; and

“Whereas Toronto city council has awarded the TTC contract to Bombardier in Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas Ministers Flaherty and Cannon have been advised by our local MPP of the need for federal funding for the TTC contract at Bombardier in Thunder Bay;

“We, the undersigned, residents of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario, call upon the government of Ontario to petition the government of Canada to meet the commitment of the previous federal government to fund the TTC contract for subway cars to be built at Bombardier in Thunder Bay.”

I support this petition and I sign it.

#### PEDESTRIAN WALKWAY

**Mr. Norm Miller (Parry Sound–Muskoka):** I’m receiving more and more petitions to do with the dam at Mary Lake and Port Sydney. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the dam at Mary Lake has historically provided a pedestrian walkway for use by the community and visitors since the dam’s construction; and

“Whereas the walkway provides a vital link and a tourist attraction for the community of Port Sydney; and

“Whereas restricting access to the walkway would result in pedestrian use of the roadway where motor vehicle traffic poses a danger to pedestrians; and

“Whereas closure of the pedestrian walkway across the dam is inconsistent with other provincial government programs, including Ontario’s action plan for healthy eating and active living and the Trails for Life program, both of which promote active lifestyles; and

“Whereas all ministries should strive to encourage and support healthy lifestyles;

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

“That the Ministry of Natural Resources continue to permit the use of the pedestrian walkway over Mary Lake dam indefinitely.”

I support this petition.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition that has been sent to me by workers at SEIU. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, in June 2003, Dalton McGuinty said Ontario Liberals are committed to ensuring that nursing home residents receive more personal care each day and will reinstate minimum standards, and inspectors will be required to audit the staff-to-resident ratios; and

“Whereas Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman, in October 2004, said that the Ontario government will not set a specified number of

care hours nursing home residents are to receive each day; and

“Whereas Ontario nursing home residents still receive the lowest number of care hours in the Western world; and

“Whereas studies have indicated nursing home residents should receive at least 4.1 hours of nursing care per day; and

“Whereas a coroner’s jury in April 2005 recommended the Ontario government establish a minimum number of care hours nursing home residents must receive each day;

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

“That the government of Ontario immediately enact a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of nursing care for each nursing home resident per day.”

I agree with the petitioners. I’ve affixed my signature to this.

#### FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

**Mr. Jeff Leal (Peterborough):** I have a petition today to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Access to Trades and Professions in Ontario

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas action by Ontario’s trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario’s trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

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

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario’s regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario’s employers, Ontario’s newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

### VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I have affixed my signature.

1550

### TUITION

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition sent to me by the University of Toronto Students’ Administrative Council. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario Liberal government cancelled the tuition fee freeze after only two years and approved fee increases of up to 36% over the next four years; and

“Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by more than four times the rate of inflation over the past 15 years; and

“Whereas a majority of Ontarians oppose tuition fee increases and support greater public funding for colleges and universities; and

“Whereas improvements to student financial assistance are undermined by fee increases; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s recent increase to student loan limits is set to push student debt to approximately \$28,000 for a four-year program; and

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students’ call to stop tuition fee hikes and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“—reduce tuition fees to 2004 levels for all students in Ontario and implement an immediate tuition fee freeze;

“—increase public funding for post-secondary education to promote access and quality;

“—expand access to financial aid in Ontario, especially for part-time students; and

“—double the number of upfront, need-based grants for Ontario students.”

I affix my signature to this.

### FAIR ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS

**Mr. Bob Delaney (Mississauga West):** I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly regarding access to trades and professions in Ontario. I’d like to thank Imran Pirzada of McFarren Boulevard in Mississauga for sending it to me. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Ontario enjoys the continuing benefit of the contributions of men and women who choose to leave their country of origin in order to settle in Canada, raise their families, educate their children and pursue their livelihoods and careers; and

“Whereas newcomers to Canada who choose to settle in Ontario find frequent, arbitrary and unnecessary obstacles that prevent skilled tradespeople, professional and managerial talent from practising the professions, trades and occupations for which they have been trained in their country of origin; and

“Whereas action by Ontario’s trades and professions could remove many such barriers, but Ontario’s trades and professions have failed to recognize that such structural barriers exist, much less to take action to remove them, and to provide fair, timely, transparent and cost-effective access to trades and professions for new Canadians trained outside Canada;

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

“That the Ontario Legislative Assembly urge the members of all parties to swiftly pass Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006, and to require Ontario’s regulated professions and trades to review and modify their procedures and qualification requirements to swiftly meet the needs of Ontario’s employers, Ontario’s newcomers and their own membership, all of whom desperately need the very skills new Canadians bring working for their organizations, for their trades and professions, and for their families.”

I’m pleased to support and sign this petition and to ask page Andrew to carry it.

### PROPERTY TAXATION

**Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie–Lincoln):** The petitions in support of the Homestead Act keep rolling in, like this one signed by Roger and Jean Robert of Fenwick and Edith McLean of Beamsville, that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas property assessments are skyrocketing across the province of Ontario; and



“Whereas the Ombudsman’s recent report was scathing in his criticism of the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. (MPAC); and

“Whereas increasing assessments, taxes, utility costs and gas prices have made it increasingly difficult to make ends meet; and

“Whereas the Homestead Act as proposed by Erie–Lincoln MPP Tim Hudak will cap assessment increases to 5% per year while home ownership is maintained, allow home improvements of up to \$25,000 per year without an assessment increase and contains a property tax break for seniors and the disabled;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Homestead Act into law.”

In support, my signature.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (LEARNING TO AGE 18), 2006

#### LOI DE 2006 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (APPRENTISSAGE JUSQU'À L'ÂGE DE 18 ANS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 29, 2006, on the motion for third reading of Bill 52, An Act to amend the Education Act respecting pupil learning to the age of 18 and equivalent learning / 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.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):** Further debate?

**Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity–Spadina):** I am here with my colleagues. The member from Nickel Belt will probably speak on this bill as well near the end of today’s session. It’s good that she’s here because we need a lot of speakers to speak to this bill. We have a lot of concerns.

New Democrats have opposed this bill from the very beginning.

**Hon. David Caplan (Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Deputy Government House Leader):** Shame.

**Mr. Marchese:** I’ll explain why to you, David.

Bill 52 requires students to stay until age 18. If they haven’t finished their grade 12 degree, they won’t be able to leave, they’re going to have to stay until age 18. We say that government—particularly the Liberal government—does things that are politically expedient but often are not pedagogically effective, and this is one such bill.

While it is a laudable goal to say students should stay until age 18—and who wouldn’t want any student to stay until age 18, or 19 or 20 or 21 or 22 or 23 or 26, or even later than that? Which parent wouldn’t want their chil-

dren to stay as long as they could in high school, of course, and then beyond, in college and university? Who wouldn’t? There might be some, but my suspicion is that parents want their kids to stay in school. So the government presents it as if somehow the opposition that opposes this is giving up on students while, oh, no, they are not giving up on these students. They’ve got this creative law, Bill 52, that will address the problems that we have had in terms of dropouts, with students at risk in particular, for a long time.

I want to do a little review of the bill because those of you who are watching often don’t get a complete sense of what we’re talking about. This bill originally said, “We’re going to force students to stay until age 18,” unless of course they got their grade 12 degree by age 16, and, “We’re going to penalize them in a variety of ways if they don’t do what the bill proposes.” They were going to force students to lose their licence if they left school without having their degree. They were not going to be able to get their licence unless they did their degree. That was the first fear and threat that they imposed and presented in the original bill.

They then said to parents, “If you knowingly keep your child out of school, we’re going to fine you 1,000 bucks.” That jumped from the \$200 that the Tories had to \$1,000, as proposed by the original bill of the Liberal Party. It was intended to get tough, even on parents, and it was going to fine students, up from the \$200 to \$1,000, because they felt that they needed to be tough on students as well. Then they were going to get tough with employers. If employers knowingly hired someone who should have been in school, they were going to get a fine, up from 200 bucks under the Tories to 1,000 under the Liberals.

We thought, “This sounds pretty dumb.” Why would you punish students, especially students who are having a difficult time in school, with a possible fine of 1,000 bucks? Why would you, of all people, fine parents? I suspect most parents want their kids to go to school. You then put a proposal to suggest that they would be fined 1,000 bucks if they somehow knowingly kept their kids away from school. And why would you punish employers? The idea was, of course, that this government was so serious about keeping kids in school that they were willing to accept any measure that would keep them in the school system. We said then that it was dumb; we say it now. People said in the hearings that it was a dumb idea. To be fair, the government listened to that.

**1600**

I propose to you that the government never really intended for that to be the object of the government’s interest. In my view, it was a decoy. It was a distraction. It was a red herring. The government really didn’t care about the issue of the fine, and the government really didn’t care about the issue of the driver’s licence. What they really cared about was the third part of this bill, which is the equivalent learning program.

I know that the parliamentary assistant had some concerns about this bill, to be sure. But I am not sure that he

and others were quite aware of what the former minister, Monsieur Kennedy, had in mind when he introduced it. The real objective of this bill has to do with equivalent learning programs, of which I will speak much more as I get on with my discourse here on this particular issue. The point of it all is that they want to introduce these equivalent learning programs as a way of making sure that they reduce the dropout rate for students at risk in particular. The bill is about how to keep kids in school. The political motivation is how they can show that the dropout rate under the Liberals has diminished as a result of this great bill. That is really the point, and how to get to it is the equivalent learning program.

People like me attack the whole issue of students being penalized by not being able to get their licence, because so many argued, "Imagine, students who, for so many different reasons, have to drop out of school and would need to drive a car would be penalized doubly by not being able to drive a car, particularly if they are in rural or northern areas." People spoke to that. People spoke to the idea of fining parents and fining students and fining employers as being a silly idea. So the government had to listen.

But I suggest that it wasn't listening that was the issue here; the real question was the equivalent learning programs. The equivalent learning programs are programs that are offered outside of the educational system, what we and teachers are saying has to do with contracting out programs to people outside of the educational systems who are not teachers and are not intended to be teachers—and I will show later on that the government really doesn't want them to be teachers.

What's the real issue that the government hasn't talked about? Why is it that students drop out? Surely there must be a reason. The government never assessed that particular problem. The government never spoke to why it is that students drop out. The government never once mentioned anything to do with that perhaps there are serious educational difficulties students have that the educational system never dealt with, that if you allow them to happen for a long time, become much more difficult to deal with. That's a real issue. Not once did the minister or the parliamentary assistant or any of the committee Liberal members talk about the educational difficulty that a student might be having as one of the fundamental reasons why some students, after age 16, drop out. Not once did the minister or the Liberal members of that committee talk about, perhaps, psychological problems that students might have, mental illness problems that students might have. Not once did they talk about substance abuse that might have originated in the home or the mom or dad or both and that they might have picked up as being part of that environment. Nobody talked about alcohol or sexual abuse as being things that could traumatize students to the extent that, if it's not dealt with by the age of 16, students simply want to leave the system.

Not once did the government speak about those real problems, and unless we deal with educational problems,

which can be severe in many cases, unless we deal with psychological or mental illness problems and unless we deal with economic issues that some students have, particularly as it relates to poverty, we're not really dealing with the problem.

You won't be able to hold many students back at age 17 unless you've dealt with these problems. I made this point over and over again in committee, urging the government to deal with the issue of the lack of youth workers that we've had in the Ontario system, youth workers who deal with troubled students. Because of their ability to relate and to communicate to these students, they were able to hold them back. Because there was a youth worker working with either their psychological issues, mental illness issues or other economic problems they might have had, they were able to hold those students back.

Not once did I hear the government say, "We're going to deal with that." The Conservative government fired many of those youth workers, and you Liberals were going to bring them back. If you brought them back, it would indicate to me, to parents and to others that you're genuinely interested in dealing with kids at risk.

Not once did the Liberal membership of that committee talk about the technology programs that we have in our system and what to do about the fact that under the Conservative government these programs were decimated. You Liberals were interested, are interested, in bringing some of these technological, auto mechanics and aircraft programs back into our system.

We used to have a healthy system that provided alternative programs—decimated by the Tories and attacked by M. Kennedy when he was in opposition. Yet neither he nor the current minister or this government has ever said, "We're not only going to expand those programs but update the equipment of those programs so that students have current, up-to-date equipment to be able to learn whatever trade they're getting into." I never heard one man or woman in that committee talk about these things—not once.

We have lost industrial arts programs in the elementary schools. We used to have a lot of good programs in the elementary schools, getting students ready for programs other than academic ones so that they would have an early start at understanding that life isn't simply academic learning, but that other tactile trades lead not only to self-fulfillment but to jobs that are well-paying once they retire themselves out of the high school system, out of a college system or even out of a university system.

So I say to the government that if you want to reduce the dropout rate, bring back some of those counsellors. Bring back some of the social workers, some of the psychologists we used to have that dealt in schools, in situ, with these students. Bring them back. Bring back the youth workers. Bring back these technological programs, these trade schools that used to thrive many, many years ago.

And so the government says, "We love all of the different programs we offer. We think we have a great

system.” If you believe that, why is it that you are offering alternative programs, so-called “equivalent learning programs” outside of the educational system? If you are proud of your co-op programs and if you are proud of the pre-apprenticeship programs that you claim are so great, why not expand those programs? Nothing prevents you from doing that.

So you have to ask yourselves, and teachers and parents have to ask themselves: why are they doing it? They are doing it, my friends, because they want to contract out work to non-teachers. That’s what this is about. It’s contracting out work to non-teachers.

**1610**

The minister quotes Horace Mann when he says, “Education is the great equalizer of the conditions of man”—and he meant that for both sexes, I’m sure. She says that Bill 52 helps us to get there. How? How does Bill 52 allow us to get there, to be the great equalizer, when all you are doing is offering some programs, which I’ll of speak in a moment, that are presumably equivalent in nature, i.e., possibly as good as what we offer in the educational system? I tell you this: Education can be the great equalizer, but Bill 52 doesn’t do it. So to quote some famous individual and make it appear that, through such a quote, you are actually equalizing opportunities for all students by providing alternative programs—you’re not doing it. It’s just a whole lot of blah, blah, blah. That’s what I am trying to do in the hour that I’ve got, to expose the problems as articulated by the minister.

The minister says that 30,000 students, 16- and 17-year-olds, leave high school and put themselves in a deep hole. But the minister, as I said earlier, doesn’t address the reasons why they’re leaving. Then the minister adds, “We’re not going to give up on them.” Well, neither are we. That’s why we’re proposing that you actually provide the services to help these students to deal with the problems they’ve got. If the issues are poverty, then you’ve got to deal with that. That’s why we attacked the Liberal government when they claimed and said that they were going to get rid of the clawback of the national child benefit program; they didn’t, leaving more and more parents and their children in poverty. Deal with that, because if you can deal with that, and students come to school with a little more attention given to what they’re eating because they might have a couple of more bucks to buy some good, healthy things to eat, they might come to school a little bit more ready and prepared to learn. Deal with the poverty issues.

But you don’t do that. You don’t deal with the educational issues in a way that says to me that students who’ve got special needs are going to be dealt with. My colleague from Nickel Belt has been for years haranguing and attacking this government, in as aggressive a way as possible, saying that kids who have autism need help. The government claimed in opposition that they were going to do that; they get into power and they don’t. So families are left to their own devices, and they do not have the money to put them in a private system that could cost anywhere from \$10,000 to \$50,000. So it means that

students with special needs are not getting the attention they need. I tell you this: Bill 52 will not deal with the issue of autism and the issue of at-risk kids unless you provide the services to help.

You’re not dealing with the issue of mental illness unless you provide services. One in five students has a mental illness, and we have decried and attacked the government on a regular basis saying that they need resources, that we need resources. Unless you deal with those issues, those kids are at risk, and your believing that providing an alternative equivalent program at age 17 is going to deal with this—it does not, and you all know it, or at least you ought to know it. I think that if you’re thinking beings, you will conclude, as I have, that that measure of an equivalent learning program—a contracted-out program to some community service out there that will provide an equivalent program—just won’t do it. You all know it, I’m convinced of it; if you don’t, it’s worse. If you don’t know it, I think that we lack intellectual integrity in this place.

What does the minister offer to do? She said that she took a serious look at the high school system. That’s what she said. So when she said that last week, I wondered how she had looked at the system seriously, because nowhere in her comments and nowhere in this bill do I get a sense that she has studied fully the high school system.

She continues. She said she sought out top educators across the country—indeed, the world—and Bill 52, she argued further, comes out of academia and the front lines. Really? Which front lines are we talking about? Liberal front-bench lines? The back lines of the Liberal back-benches? Which front lines are we talking about? I’m telling you, there aren’t that many teachers I know and there aren’t that many academics I know—perhaps the minister knows some academics and front-line teachers who have proposed Bill 52. But I can guarantee you, listeners and citizens, teachers are not advocating for this. They’re not.

So I don’t know who this minister consulted, but they’re not front-line teachers, and I do not believe they are academics. I do not believe for a moment she has done a world study of this issue to conclude that Bill 52 is going to solve the problems of students at risk. So it’s laughable to me when she makes this claim. It undermines her; it really does. It undermines the minister to say, “I’ve looked at the system thoroughly. I have scurried the world and consulted magicians, possibly, certainly academics and other front-line folks to come up with Bill 52.”

Do you understand what I’m saying? They shouldn’t say those things. They should be modest in their proposal. They should say, “Yeah, we think Bill 52 might do it. We’re certainly trying. Yeah, it could; you never know. If we hold a couple of students back, maybe some of them will be able to take advantage of it. It might work for some of them.” If you said that, then I would say, “Yeah, okay, maybe it’s possible.” But when you exaggerate so badly, it only speaks to the fact that this is politically expedient and not pedagogically effective.

This bill is about saying to parents who have troubled kids, "Don't worry, we'll hold them back." Well, good luck. I hope you have a lot of good reins to hold them back. After I have explained about the educational difficulties and mental illness problems or psychological problems they might have had or any kind of abuse—substance or sexual—you don't get rid of that with an alternative program. Sorry, you're not going to do it.

Teachers know what kinds of programs work, she said. I don't know. What are they? They're not stated. Not once in committee and not once in this House did the minister ever make reference to any particular program that works, that I'm aware of, except to say that they work. Make it so, Minister, because I just don't see it. I don't see it from a front-line perspective. I don't see it from the New Brunswick perspective, where they actually did it and it has been proven to have had no effect—not even marginal; no effect. So as she scurried the world, including this country, to find some other province that has done this—New Brunswick has done it, and there is no positive effect, not even marginal, on those students. Good work, Minister, you and your team.

Then she scurried the world some more. I guess there are eight or nine states where they've done this and they hold students back till age 18, and some studies show that the result has been improved by 1.2%. We create a whole system, a whole bureaucracy to improve but by a little margin, 1.2%. Why would you do that? What academics have you consulted, for God's sake? Who are the experts—name them in this House—who would lead you fine Liberals to conclude you're on to something? New Brunswick and eight or nine states have done it; no improvement in Canada, marginal improvement in the US. You create a bureaucracy for that? I don't know. You understand, I lose faith in some of you.

1620

**Interjection:** Not all of us?

**Mr. Marchese:** Some of you are okay, I suppose.

**Mr. Tim Hudak (Erie-Lincoln):** How about McNeely?

**Mr. Marchese:** I won't name names.

The minister goes on—she does. I think she actually spoke for 20 or 25 minutes. She said that "students do not benefit from a one-size-fits-all education...." Remarkable. I thought, yes, that's a good point. She said that "we know that every student does not learn like every other student." Okay. Good. I think she's right.

Why, then, is she still using the one-size-fits-all funding formula? The funding formula is a one-size-fits-all formula. How could the minister say, "Well, this bill allows students to learn in different places, different environments, because one size doesn't fit all," yet continue to use a Conservative funding formula that fits and slots everybody in the same way without taking into account differences in students and boards? And why is it that she has invented another formula for special ed which is called block funding?

The government has come up with a clever way of spending less money on special education. The intensive

support amount, which cost the government a great deal of money to provide the special education help—actually brought in by the Conservative government—was an \$890-million program. The Liberals have got a clever way of cutting that cost. They have eliminated the ISA, the intensive support amount, and they're now going to give block funding to schools, meaning that every school will get money not according to their different needs, but according to the number of students who are in that school, meaning that if you've got 100 kids with special education needs in one school, they're not going to get any extra money, because the Liberal government has come up with a unique formula for special ed, and it's called block funding.

If this government, this minister, says the one-size-fits-all doesn't work and says Bill 52 deals with it, how come she's still perpetuating an unequal funding formula and has now introduced a special education funding formula through block funding that makes it even more impossible for students to get the help they need and to have education be the great equalizer that the minister speaks about? If kids don't get the special help, education cannot be the great equalizer as la ministre claims.

We've got a transportation problem where, across this big province of ours, there are different needs. The one-size-fits-all formula doesn't work. Why doesn't the minister change that? Why does she use that phrase, "one-size-fits-all," loosely and forget that she is conflicted by so many other policies where that particular formula doesn't apply?

Maintenance programs: We don't distinguish between old schools and new schools. Why doesn't she fix that? The reason I say this is because she really doesn't believe this point about the one-size-fits-all; they use it, and they hope that the citizens watching will believe it. That's why I have to point out the contradictions, so that those of you who are watching and listening can see that what they say versus what they do is inconsistent.

She continues, "This bill would allow students to mould their educational journey to their own interests and natural skills." Well, what is wrong with the alternative programs that we provide now? Why not extend the programs that we offer now to more students, and why not deal with the problems that I raised earlier on to be able to give those students those better opportunities?

The minister says, on the last page, of my two minutes, "The member for Trinity-Spadina, on the other hand, needs to go out and talk to some of the people in our schools. He needs to talk to the folks at Central Tech, which I think is in his riding. He needs to talk to the folks who know that we've had an uptake in co-op programs because students can now count two co-op credits as mandatory credits. He needs to talk to the people in the schools who understand that the programs we're putting in place are indeed the substance of this student success initiative. He needs to talk to the teachers who are very happy that we're putting student success teachers"—and she goes on and on.

What she's saying is, she's proud of the alternative programs that she's offering in the system. Why, if you

feel strongly about the great things you are doing, would you then require to provide other programs outside of the educational system by contracting out those programs to other providers, and non-teachers at that? Why would you do that?

The minister says that I should go out and walk through Central Tech. By the way, I've walked through this place most of my life, so I'm quite familiar with the programs they have there. I even did my practice teaching at Central Tech. So when the minister says that I should go there, I tell her that she should take a little walk from here to Central Tech and do a little tour of the great programs Central Tech used to offer, and still offers, and that we should increase those kinds of programs that they're offering. So on the one hand she says, "Marchese has to go and see what we're offering," and on the other hand she says, "Ah, but we need other programs outside of the education system." I don't get it. And I wonder if my good friend Jim Bradley gets it.

**Hon. James J. Bradley (Minister of Tourism, minister responsible for seniors, Government House Leader):** I get it. I just think they should give you a question.

**Mr. Marchese:** I know. And it's so good to have you, Jim, just to remind the folks that we need to do that.

But more pertinent to this particular debate—because you were a former teacher as well, and you're on the front lines of this bench, by the way. The minister was talking about the front lines earlier on, and I suspect that you, as a front-line minister and as a front-line teacher, have no knowledge of what she speaks. And if you do, you don't support her. She claims you, on the front lines, understand that we need these programs outside of the educational system. I don't believe that.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Marchese:** Yeah, sure. As a former teacher, he knows, as I do and others—

**Mrs. Carol Mitchell (Huron–Bruce):** You're a former teacher?

**Mr. Marchese:** I just said that, yes—that the front lines don't support what you're doing.

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** They support the students.

**Mr. Marchese:** You're absolutely right: They support the students. We don't doubt that. That's not the debate, Dave. The debate is Bill 52. The debate—

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** They didn't like the social contract.

**Mr. Marchese:** You crack me up, I'm telling you.

I hope that you good citizens are getting a fairly good sense of what we are talking about. OEETA, the Catholic teacher organization, and OSSTF, the public teacher federation across Ontario, have serious misgivings. The parliamentary assistant quotes from various papers that they have shown that they support the government. I am telling you that the majority of teachers have misgivings and many of the OSSTF members have misgivings, including the OEETA members.

I will read from the OEETA flyer that, yes, supports the government in so many ways. But at the end of this flyer, they say the following:

"OEETA believes that all secondary school credits must be assessed by certified teachers...."

"OEETA will vigorously oppose any use of unqualified instructors in place of certified teachers and rejects any erosion of the secondary diploma."

Actually, those are the only two lines that I agree with out of this OEETA flyer.

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** Read the rest.

**Mr. Marchese:** No, no. You'll have to do that for yourself. But I do remind you, for the benefit of the citizens that are watching, that they do not support, in large part, what this government is doing; that is, farming out, contracting out teacher positions to other outside providers.

Furthermore, because of the objections made by OEETA and OSSTF in particular, including individual teachers who came to Toronto and other hearings that we had, the government became very nervous. The then parliamentary assistant, now minister, must have realized that something had to be done to appease the teachers, to placate them somehow. So she, in the usual Liberal manner, had a meeting with them, not to console and not to placate, but to tell them that she really had some serious amendments that were going to deal with their issues. Let me tell you what they were.

**1630**

First of all, the fines are gone. As I say, they were never really intended to be serious.

The issue of licensing or getting their licence is now gone except for the serious offenders and serious, serious truancy, but that issue is gone. And that, I put to you, was a red herring from the beginning, so it wasn't a big deal. I know the parliamentary assistant might disagree with me on this, but I believe that it was never intended to be serious.

What remains out of this bill is the offering of equivalent learning programs. That's all that remains. It's that small.

What the minister did to appease, placate, pretend to be listening to the federations—this is what she did. She said that principals are now required to sign off. Once a program has been approved, the principal signs off. In my mind, as I see it, it gives the impression of legitimacy by having a principal approve it, but all it is is a stamp of approval. That's all it is. It makes it appear that principals are really actively involved in the program. Nothing of the sort. All that person is going to do, man or a woman, is a stamp of approval and it's done.

Second, the minister will now have to approve every program that's offered, every equivalent learning program that's offered, for one year. After the one year is up, member from Nickel Belt, the minister doesn't have to approve the individual programs anymore. Do you have a sense of why one year, member from Nickel Belt? Take a little guess.

**Ms. Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** There's an election.

**Mr. Marchese:** Yes, you got it right. I knew she would find the answer in no time. You understand there's

going to be an election next October. That more or less gives you one year to get re-elected. After that one year, the minister doesn't have to sign off anymore on those individual equivalent learning programs, whatever they are. So you wonder. You wonder, if it's important to have the minister sign off and approve each program, why is it just for one year? And if it's not important, why do you include the minister signing off for the one year? It's all about politics. It's about making OECTA and OSSTF feel good. But the teachers got nothing out of those amendments, absolutely nothing. They got the illusion of something being done. It made them feel good so they could go back to their members and say, "We had a meeting with the minister and, boy, was she nice; boy, does she listen well; and, boy, does she understand." They go back to their places, wherever they may be, thinking they got something out of that deal, and they got nothing. It's pretty sad, actually. It's almost laughable. But I need to point it out. I need to point out the truth, and the truth is that they got nothing out of this deal.

The minister says, "Ontario publicly funded education will remain in public hands for the public good. Principals and teachers will remain the backbone...." I want to exfoliate that little remark, or that onion, as I often say.

**Interjection:** Exfoliate?

**Mr. Marchese:** Exfoliate. Isn't that a beautiful term? I love that term.

These programs are being offered outside of the educational system. It's not public; it's not in public hands. It's outside of the public system, outside of the principals, except they sign off, but that's hardly a big public deal. Just to sign off doesn't make it public, for God's sake. These programs are taken out, farmed out, contracted out, so it's not in public hands. The minister likes to say it to make it appear to the OSSTF organization and the Catholic organization, OECTA, that it's still in public hands, but it isn't, you understand. It isn't. That's the brilliancy of the Liberal government: making it appear that they're doing some positive, but in reality that toolbox is empty.

Let me tell you, as I often like to say—it's funny to say it that way. I asked Ms. Goldberg in committee, "Can I ask you, is this the section where we would know whether the programs offered would be by certified teachers, or is there another section that will deal with it later?"

Ms. Goldberg replied, "I believe that it would be in the policies, standards and guidelines that will be issued under this section."

I replied, "So what we will get, and it's not clear here today but it's clear in your mind, under paragraph i of section 3.0.1, is, 'require that boards develop and offer equivalent learning opportunities to their pupils in accordance with the policies, guidelines or standards.' This is what you point to, to say that the equivalent learning programs will be provided by certified teachers."

Ms. Goldberg replied, "If that's done, it will be through those policies. I can't tell you right now what those policies—"

I said, "I understand: 'If that's done'; that's the question I'm asking you, because teachers are worried about that and so am I. You're saying, 'If that is done, it's not clear that it will be so.' You're saying, 'If that is done by the minister.'"

Nowhere in this bill does it require that the equivalent learning programs be taught by teachers—nowhere. And because it is not written, it is not the intention of this government and this minister to make it so, that those programs being taught outside of the educational system be taught by teachers. I put to you, teachers and citizens, that these programs will be taught by non-teachers. Why? It's about saving money. It's all about saving money. They will not be qualified teachers. We are not certain what kinds of programs there are going to be. We are not certain of the quality, except the minister is going to sign off. Big deal, because after next year, she no longer has to sign off.

They, not being teachers, do not do a security check, as other teachers do. They've got to do a criminal check, a security check, right? These people don't have to do that. We are throwing these programs out there and we are going to hope for the best. Is this the sort of equivalent learning we can expect from the McGuinty government, sending students to learn burgerology perhaps at McDonald's or handing out credits for completing barista training at Starbucks? What can we expect of these equivalent learning programs?

Oh, to be sure, the Liberals have big ideas, because they consulted academics, experts. They scoured the world to find Bill 52. To be sure, they know what they're talking about. And to be sure, they have a fairly good sense of what programs we're talking about. We, of course, don't share that light, because they haven't shared it with us, but at some point they will. To be sure, these programs will be of high quality, so that students will be able to stay in the school system, so that the government can then say, "Lo and behold, the student dropout rate has gone down." That's what this is about: to create an image of having reduced the dropout rate. That's what all of this is about, this little part of this bill that they kept, to show that the level of dropouts has gone down. I tell you, it's not going to work. I believe 101% that it's not going to work and I believe the Liberals—if they're following what I'm saying—will believe the same, assuming they're paying attention. Because it won't do it.

There are many other issues that I want to talk about. There is a letter that has been sent from Hamilton-Wentworth. This is interesting because I think it speaks to many of the problems that teachers are feeling and fearing. It's the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, so when I use the acronym, you'll know.

**1640**

Second, the HWDSB's board of trustees has significant concerns about equivalent learning, quality and accountability: "We realize that there are currently two credits for accreditation towards a secondary school diploma that can be earned outside the school system."

They continue: "Extending credits to other bodies outside the secondary school system causes the board of trustees some alarm. Without known criteria for recognition of what might be considered equivalent standing, the credits might not meet those requirements presently met by the secondary school or by the Royal Conservatory of Music. The purpose of the curriculum in place with the education system is to provide employees with identifiable benchmarks for learning and transparency in education.... Without these parameters, it is our opinion the proposed notion of equivalent learning will lead to educational opportunities that lack structure and rigour. Unfortunately, this aspect of the proposed legislation has the appearance that the government is comfortable outsourcing education.... How many certifications requiring even less hours of training would be bundled for credit value? What kinds of equivalent learning are going to be recognized?"

"The expansion of opportunities outside of the existing system could have devastating impacts on some optional courses in schools—music, dance, technology—which would lessen the accessibility of a range of courses available to all students. There is the potential that school boards might lose funding as eight of 30 credits could be provided outside the school system"—eight out of 30. "And there is the possibility that the concept of certified instructors, entrenched in the College of Teachers, could be undermined by parallel institutions with unqualified instructors setting up outside the school system to obtain equivalent credits for students.... In our opinion the best advantage for our students would be to build on these initiatives and have the means to do so with our most at-risk students."

I want to mention something else they said: "The Ministry of Education has been providing school boards, through the student success funding, the means to provide a wide range of flexible courses to meet a variety of student needs without sacrificing qualified teacher instruction or common Ontario evaluation standards. HWDSB has been experiencing tremendous success with this approach, as well as with its long-standing SALEP centre that reintegrates 80% of students back into the mainstream." Meaning that you are offering some programs that appear to be working, in the opinion of this board, and you should do more of that. What you're about to propose through Bill 52 undermines what you are currently doing.

They conclude, by saying, "Minister, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board applauds your efforts and desire to provide all secondary school students with good outcomes in preparation for a successful future." They even praise you. "We would appreciate, however, if the minister will reconsider those aspects of Bill 52 that deal with equivalent learning. HWDSB would prefer that the minister achieve these outcomes through the intent of language of the act by 'building on the creativity and strength of Ontario's educational system.'"

By the way, much of this was in the preamble, which I said on the first day of the debate was the best thing in this bill—your preamble. What this board is saying is,

deal with the strengths of the system you've got and make it better. Do not provide an equivalent learning program that is at the moment vague, uncertain, that will create the possibility of providing a whole lot of programs that will take students away from the high school system and put them into another equivalent, parallel program in the private system that simply doesn't guarantee the quality that we are looking for.

I'm urging those teachers who are watching today to put pressure on this government. I do not believe for a moment that what the federations got out of this minister does anything good for you, teachers, or for the system. I don't believe it for a moment. So I urge you to meet with your MPPs, present these problems to them and tell them that you disagree profoundly with the direction in which they are going and that there are consequences for them, should they consider this. This will affect the education of those students, based on the what we suspect is not higher learning, and by doing so, you will point out to the government that you have serious concerns.

We don't know about the quality of these programs. We have no clue. There's nothing written that would allow us to feel good about these programs. If, indeed, the government will allow eight credits to be taught outside of the educational system, it undermines public education, and that should be of serious concern to all the teachers. There's still time. We've got a couple more days here of debate, and there's time for you to be able to influence this government.

Governments only respond to pressure. That is the nature of the beast. If you do not apply pressure on governments, they simply carry on doing whatever they believe is correct. In this particular case, I believe they're wrong, and unless you tell them so, they think you, the front lines, are in agreement with them. Based on my discussions with most teachers I talked to on this bill, you do not agree with this government, and unless you tell them on a face-to-face basis, nothing will happen.

We've had some good debates on this bill, but the majority of people who came in front of the committee opposed it. The only ones who supported Bill 52 were the ones who are waiting to provide programs and make some money out of this deal. Those were the only service providers who were happy. This is not to denigrate them; that's not the issue. Many of these people provide programs—and I am certain there is a need for them—and it's not my intention to belittle what they do, except to say that they were the only ones happy with Bill 52. The majority of other deputants, including students, and yes, mostly teachers and federations, French-speaking from the French-speaking board, and the public and the Catholic, all expressed concern, in particular about the equivalent learning programs. They all spoke to that. That's why the government has desperately tried in their amendments to make the federations feel good.

I am of the view that more and more teachers, as they know about this, will become, if not enraged, pretty angry about what they've seen with this government over this bill. We urge them to fight back. What we need is to

communicate with many of you, by the way, so those of you who are watching and are teachers, just send us your e-mails so we can communicate with you. We need to tell you what we said about Bill 52. We've got it all there for you to read, so if you just send us your e-mail, we'll be able to communicate in a better way. You won't be able to get that information from the government. No, siree. They've already consulted the world, they've consulted the experts, they've already consulted academia and they've already consulted the front lines. They've already done their job. We need to do ours. Unless we work together to present a common front against this particular bill, we're going to lose and we're going to lose it strong.

**1650**

We have a little bill now. It isn't much of a bill. It used to be much longer. All we have now is that the government is interested in offering equivalent learning programs by non-teachers who will not be required to do a security or criminal check.

And when the Liberals were in opposition, when the Tories introduced it, we thought it was a good idea. Why isn't it a good idea to make sure those programs that are taught will be taught by teachers who will go through a criminal check as a way of protecting our children? Why is that not good enough for this government anymore? It was good when the Tories were in power; why isn't it good today? Surely we are putting kids at risk. Young people are vulnerable. We are putting them at risk by putting them in these contracted-out programs. Surely if I believe it, many of the folks listening to the program will believe it too.

**Hon. Mike Colle (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration):** That's an exaggeration.

**Mr. Marchese:** If they are not teachers, they are not required to have a criminal check. Monsieur Colle, is that an exaggeration? It's not.

**Hon. Mr. Colle:** It is.

**Mr. Marchese:** It is not. Yeah, I want you to do your two minutes and tell me why it's exaggerated. I don't understand. Did I say something that's exaggerated, Shelley?

**Hon. Mr. Colle:** That's just exaggeration.

**Mr. Marchese:** What did I say? If I say it in whispering tones, it won't sound so exaggerated. Okay, here we go. Maybe if I do it with a lower tone.

These programs are not going to be taught by teachers, correct?

**Hon. Mr. Colle:** They're going to be taught through the school board.

**Mr. Marchese:** No, no, Mikey. That's the problemo. They are not taught through the school boards. The minister will have to sign off for one year. After that, sayonara.

**Hon. Mr. Colle:** It's not a problem.

**Mr. Marchese:** No, no, Michael, I'm sorry. The Minister of Citizenship doesn't know, not because—he ought to know—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I just feel a little left out.

**Mr. Marchese:** Yeah, I know—exactly. Through you, to the minister, I read the bill. In the bill it says that after the first year, the minister doesn't have to sign off on those programs anymore. Correcto?

**Hon. Mr. Colle:** The programs will be provided through the school board.

**Mr. Marchese:** Right. The programs will be provided through the school board, by outside providers signed off by the principal. The programs are offered by—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Marchese:** No, no, Michael.

Through you, Speaker, the principal doesn't provide the program; the principal just signs off.

**Hon. Mr. Colle:** The principal has total involvement—

**Mr. Marchese:** No. You see, the minister wants to believe what he wants to believe, and I understand that, because he has to try to defend the bill as best as he can. The principal is not going to be thoroughly involved, as he claims. The principal is so wiped, overwhelmed by the responsibilities that have been downloaded by the previous government, yet another task is given to him or her, and he or she is going to be overly involved in these thousands of programs that are going to be offered outside of the school system.

How, Michele, how?

**Hon. Mr. Colle:** They are very capable of doing it.

**Mr. Marchese:** Non, il n'est pas possible.

These programs are going to be offered by non-teachers, and because they are offered by non-teachers it is a parallel system outside of the public system. It's a private system, and they will not have to go through a criminal check. That's not exaggerated.

I want, through you, Speaker, the parliamentary assistant or mon ami monsieur Colle, the Minister of Citizenship, to stand up and tell me that I am wrong and that it is indeed a requirement that those non-teachers of those programs that are going to be farmed out will be criminally inspected or checked out—please.

**Mrs. Mitchell:** You're wrong, Rosario.

**Mr. Marchese:** I want to be wrong. The member for Huron-Bruce says I'm wrong. But she just makes this claim. She hasn't read the bill. I don't expect her to. Please, I don't expect her to. But neither she nor the Minister of Citizenship has read the bill. They have no way of knowing whether I am right or they are wrong. I claim they are wrong, because having read the bill, there's nothing in the bill, member from Huron, that says that these non-teachers will have a criminal check. Nada.

So I urge the Liberal members, if they are firm in their convictions, as they appear to be, without knowing, that they read the bill. Read the bill. Consult with the parliamentary assistant. Consult with the minister. See what they know, if they know. Then come back and do a 20-minute response, two-minute, whatever you like. Do something. Do some kind of a response so that the good citizens can hear the truth coming from both of you, or all of you or however many of you.

*Interjection:* You don't care about the kids.



**Mr. Marchese:** I hope you call us and tell us what you feel about this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr. Phil McNeely (Ottawa–Orléans):** It is strange to hear a whole hour of negatives, negatives, negatives and putting kids at risk by giving them the opportunity to stay in school longer and to learn. We have 51,000 kids a year drop out without a diploma. That leads to the other problems of unemployment and low earnings, and they're 15 times more likely to be incarcerated if they haven't done some post-secondary. We have to look at those statistics and say, "What are we going to do for our kids?"

That is what this Liberal bill is doing; that's what our government is doing. Other provinces have much better records of keeping their kids in school, and we have to get up to those standards. That's why we set the target of 85% of students staying in school by 2010-11. That would be up from 71% today.

This is extremely important. We're not putting the kids at risk. They're at risk now when they leave school. What we're doing is giving them an opportunity.

One of the programs I have worked on with Algonquin College and a couple of high schools in my area—we haven't got a resolution. They're all wired together and Algonquin now can deliver programs in our high schools throughout the area. Somebody from high school not liking the academic stream but able to better fit into something on the technical side will be able to register at Algonquin if this goes forward, take their courses in their home school and write the exams at Algonquin. That would be really good. We'd be keeping kids in school. This is the right way to go in Ontario.

**Mrs. Julia Munro (York North):** I'm pleased to offer a few comments in response to the member for Trinity–Spadina. I think that one of the assumptions this piece of legislation is built upon is the notion that by keeping people in school longer, somehow you're going to have some success with regard to people who don't want to be there. If we were to really look at that issue, those options, those attitudes are all formed a long time before the current leaving age of 16. So it is clear to the vast majority of students that they are better off being in school after 16.

The question of the statistics on how many students actually leave the school system is subject to a great deal of interpretation. There isn't even a really good record of students when they leave school. Sometimes they drift, sometimes they come back, sometimes they're able to acquire equivalency through the GED program. So I think that when we look at this particular piece of legislation—the government talks about providing non-teachers for particular programs and things like that. But really, the benefits of school should become obvious at a much earlier age, and that's where the effort should be made.

**Ms. Martel:** I appreciated the analysis of this bill that was done by my colleague from Trinity–Spadina. It just shows how out to lunch the government is on a critical issue facing kids.

The government should have been dealing with the serious question of why thousands and thousands of kids want to drop out of our school system. Why? And when we get to the bottom of that, what are the supports that we need in schools to engage them again and keep them there?

**1700**

I think that these kids need help with addictions, need help with mental health illness, need help dealing with sexual assault that might have happened at home, and there are no psychologists in the schools to help them deal with that, there are no social workers in the schools to help them deal with that, there are no mental health workers in the schools to help deal with that—nada.

Anyone from the government who thinks that we will just farm out that problem to equivalent learning groups, to agencies, to organizations in the community that have none of that expertise, none of that support, that are not trained to provide that support to these students—suddenly we're going to farm all these kids out to these agencies and they're going to be okay. What is wrong with you people? What are you thinking of?

The only way we're going to engage kids again is by dealing with the root problems of why they're leaving school in the first place. This government should be investing to have psychologists in the schools again, investing to have mental health workers in the schools again, investing to have addiction workers in the schools again, investing to have the trades and the industrial arts and those programs in the schools again. But until the government makes those investments in the public school system, we're not going to be helping these kids, and equivalent learning programs aren't going to be doing anything to change the root problems.

**Mr. Ted McMeekin (Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot):** I have a tremendous amount of respect and admiration for the member from Trinity–Spadina. His years of experience and his concern for kids are palpable, and I appreciate many of the good suggestions he made in his hour.

However, I do need to point out to those who are watching what he didn't say. He referenced the OECTA newsletter, but he left out the part where OECTA says:

"Members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association ... applaud the plan to match individual students' strengths, interests and career goals...."

"We agree that all secondary school students deserve an equal opportunity to graduate and that the government is prudent in taking steps to remove barriers that impede success for those at risk...."

"The strategy has a better chance of succeeding because the government is working with all stakeholders to make the legislation relevant to students and parents...."

There are other comments as well from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation which I could reference, but I think the other thing that I need to footnote here—because I was anxious, as one who sat on the committee and listened to the debate and participated

and had some concerns; and I can assure the member that there was no fraud in that which we dealt with—is that I waited and waited for the honourable member, on behalf of his party, to make a single amendment to Bill 52. Do you know, members of the Legislative Assembly, that the party opposite made not one single amendment? Notwithstanding all of the concerns that he's articulated, not one single amendment was made by the third party with respect to this legislation. And that's a shame, because I think the minister from Trinity–Spadina has a lot of good ideas that—

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** The former minister.

**Mr. McMeekin:** The former minister.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. The member for Trinity–Spadina has two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Marchese:** I do respect the member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Aldershot and I do believe in his sincerity; that's not an issue. I'm questioning the minister and the government and this bill. The reason why I did not make any amendments is because—

**Hon. Mr. Caplan:** You've got no ideas.

**Mr. Marchese:** The only thing you've got there, David, is that you're going to be providing alternative programming, and you can't amend that. It's a bad idea. You can't fix that. You can't say, "Well, this is how we make that better." The whole thing has got to be scrapped. We opposed it from the beginning. We say it's wrong. You're farming it out because you don't want teachers to be teaching these programs. You're farming it out so that you—it's all about saving money. You're not helping the kids. As the member from Nickel Belt said—it is so very painfully obvious—unless you deal with the fundamental problems that kids bring into the school system—Johnny, listen. Unless you deal with the problems, you can't solve the educational problems you're trying to put forth.

The member from Ottawa–Orléans says we're putting kids at risk by not providing Bill 52. That's not the way to do it. You're not helping those kids. The way to help the kids at risk—these are the kids who bring social problems, poverty problems. They bring psychological problems, learning, educational problems, mental health issues. They've got substance abuse issues, sexual abuse issues. You've got to deal with that. If you don't deal with that, all this about, "We want to help the kids because we really care," is all blah, blah. You don't really mean it. Deal with that, and if you do, then you're going to get to solve the problem. And then if you bring the youth workers, it will help. Youth workers know how to work with them. If you bring better technological programs into the system, you are helping the system. Improve what you've got. Don't create a bad parallel system that's private. That's not going to do the trick.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti (Scarborough Southwest):** I am pleased to have an opportunity to address this House on Bill 52, An Act to amend the Education Act respecting pupil learning to the age of 18 and equivalent learning.

I wanted to start out by saying that this is another promise that the government made over three years ago and that the government is keeping. Oftentimes, people like to say around here that promises have not been kept. Well, in the education area alone, I can count over 20 promises that we made, 20 commitments we made when we ran for office, that we've kept. We've made education a top priority during our tenure and have spent \$8.3 billion in five years in investment in Ontario's publicly funded schools.

**Class sizes:** We have shrunk the sizes of the classes and put in an additional \$126 million for smaller class sizes.

**Peace and stability:** Schools began the year in an era of peace and stability. All sorts of negotiations have taken place with the teachers, and we have, for the first time ever, contracts that run from September 2004 to August 2008.

**Specialist teachers:** We've funded approximately 600 additional specialist teachers. That's been put in place recently, and that's in addition to the almost 2,400 teachers funded to reduce class sizes in the primary grades.

**Summer training:** More than 10,000 elementary teachers took summer training and began the school year with expanded specialized training in reading, writing and math.

**Student success:** We've continued to invest in student success programs to improve the graduation rate and create new opportunities for all students, with some 1,900 new high school teachers over three years; 1,300 new teachers were in place in the school year; at least 800 teachers dedicated to the student success program.

We've continued to revise applied grades. The revised applied grades 9 and 10 mathematics curriculum, released in September 2005, is providing advanced opportunities for students in obtaining the number of credits needed for graduation.

**Learning to 18,** which is in front of us today, is a promise that we made. In December 2005, we introduced learning-to-18 legislation that, if passed, will make it mandatory for students to stay in a learning environment up to graduation or to the age of 18. The legislation that is in front of us here today is complemented by programs that provide students with more support and allow them to customize their education. Students will be able to enrol in specialist high-skill majors, earn dual credits through apprenticeship training and post-secondary courses, and take advantage of expanded co-operative education choices.

We have repair projects. Ontario public schools receive funding for badly needed repair projects, including fixing leaky roofs, replacing old boilers and installing new windows. More than 2,100 projects that started last summer have been completed or are underway, representing an investment of more than \$500 million.

**Libraries:** All Ontario students in publicly funded schools are benefiting from new textbooks and first-time dedicated funding for school libraries. This government

has provided a total of \$44 million for textbooks and other learning resources to support students in the 2005-06 school year.

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**Per pupil funding:** Recognizing their needs, the McGuinty government has increased per pupil funding by \$627 for Ontario's French-language schools. Since coming to office, the government has increased funding to the French-language system by almost \$140 million.

**Safe schools:** another promise kept. The government appointed a special safe schools action team to implement new measures to protect students. These measures include province-wide school safety audits, funding for new security devices, bullying prevention programs in all schools, bullying prevention training for principals and reviewing the Safe Schools Act.

We've also taken further steps on bullying. As part of a comprehensive bullying prevention strategy, the government has invested \$23 million over three years to reduce the incidence and fundamentally change attitudes about bullying. This includes an ongoing \$1-million partnership with Kids Help Phone, a new provincial registry of effective bullying prevention programs and the new mandatory bullying prevention program in every school in Ontario.

**Healthier schools:** another promise kept. To assist in the development of healthier lifestyle habits in our young people, the government has directed school boards and principals to provide elementary students from grades 1 to 8 with at least 20 minutes of sustained moderate to vigorous daily physical health activity each day during instruction time.

**Sabrina's Law:** We've enacted Sabrina's Law requiring every school board to establish and maintain an anaphylactic policy. This was done basically through my good friend Brantford MPP Dave Levac, requiring every school board to have training for school staff to deal with life-threatening allergies on a regular basis and have emergency procedures in place for anaphylactic pupils—also another promise kept as part of this package.

**Community use of schools:** The government is providing \$20 million to school boards to help them open up schools to non-profit community groups to use after hours and year round all across Ontario. All of us in all of our ridings have probably heard from various groups that want to use schools. We're trying to reverse what had occurred earlier prior to our being in power when school use was expensive and required payment by those who wanted to use it.

Another promise kept was literacy. Teams of experts continue to work directly with struggling schools and school boards to improve student achievement in literacy where achievement has consistently been lower than the provincial average. In 2005, more than 100 schools were provided with additional supports through the turnaround teams program. The turnaround teams are helping to raise student literacy achievement in Ontario schools.

Another promise kept: parent involvement. A new provincial parent involvement policy has been developed,

making it easier for parents to participate in their children's education.

Another promise kept: graduation rates. In 2003-04, 32% of high school students were not graduating and only 54% of elementary students were meeting the standards in reading, writing and math, but progress has been made. In 2004-05, 62% of elementary students are meeting the standards and 71% of high school students are graduating. These rates continue to rise.

**Professional development:** In October of last year, the government announced its intention to introduce a second step in teachers' professional development by requiring that every new teacher receive the new teacher induction program in the first year of teaching. The \$15-million program will be available to Ontario's approximately 10,000 new teachers each year. The program is based on the recommendations of the teacher development working table, which is a subcommittee of the education partnership table.

Finally, another promise kept: rural student success. The government has introduced a rural student success program that will improve the viability of the rural high schools, increase graduation rates and encourage more rural students to pursue post-secondary education. The new rural student success program includes a \$10-million lighthouse program and a new rural experience emphasis in the curriculum and \$3.5-million e-learning pilot project to increase the diversity of courses available at rural schools by providing a provincial platform to enable students to take the same course from a variety of different locations.

So you can see that there are several promises, several commitments that we made on the education front which we are fulfilling and which we will continue to fulfill in the rest of our term, in our mandate, here at Queen's Park.

Speaking specifically and directly to Bill 52, this bill here simply says that instead of dropping out at the age of 16, a student has to stay in school or get equivalent learning until age 18. I see absolutely nothing wrong with this process.

Kids will always drop out. You can go back 20 years, 40 years, 100 years, 500 years, and young people will decide, for one reason or another, that they don't want to go to school anymore. Later on in life, they may learn to regret that.

What the government is saying here today is that we want teenagers to stay in school until age 18, to spend those additional two years either in getting specialized training, if they're going to go into some technical program, or to continue their education and get the required courses, the required training that they need. I see nothing wrong with this.

I think of my previous profession, one that I still have, as a lawyer. When people used to come to me, when I had a law practice—

**Mr. John O'Toole (Durham):** Are you practising right now?

**Mr. Berardinetti:** No, I'm not practising right now.

When I was practising, though, people would come to me and would have to sign a document and some of them couldn't sign their signature, so they had to use an X. It was sad to see that they did not have the ability to sign their signature because they did not know how to write the letters of the alphabet. These were people who were only in their 60s or 70s, and sometimes even in their 50s, who had come to Canada from foreign countries and wanted to sign a legal document but couldn't do so.

Here in this country we not only have the opportunity to go to school, but also the government directing and providing not just regular educational programs, but also equivalent learning. So if someone wants to specialize in tool and dye making or in some other kind of technical area or semi-professional area, they stay in that program and do the kind of work and the kind of learning they need to do; I see nothing wrong with this. It fits in perfectly with the other programs that I've listed earlier in making our education system the best it can possibly be.

In closing, I want to say this: In making our education system in Ontario the best that it can possibly be, it complements our health system, which is also the best it can possibly be. When you have a good education system and a good health system, I honestly think it attracts the best employment, the best employers and the best possible environment for a good economy.

We've seen Toyota wanting to locate here in Ontario, instead of going to the United States or to other provinces. We've seen other large companies deciding to open up their plants or their operations or their offices here in Ontario. That's because we have a high level of educated people and a high level of healthy people, with a health system in place that will keep them healthy and that will allow for a productive and strong workforce.

So this particular bill fits into the larger plan, which I fully support. I think the government is doing the right thing in having a strong education system and a strong health system and ultimately a strong province for all the people in Ontario.

I'm happy to support Bill 52 here today.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

**Mr. O'Toole:** I listened to the member from Scarborough Southwest, and he did list a litany of what they consider to be improvements in education.

Fundamentally, one of the articles in the paper today outlined some of the problems with education, and not just in the auditor's report on the general neglect of children.

In all respects, I would say that all three parties, including the member from Trinity-Spadina, who spoke earlier, are passionate about education, and they see the value of it with respect to an individual achieving their full potential in life.

In fact, if you look at the title of Bill 52, you'll see that it's "Learning to Age 18." It really makes a very good sort of sound bite, if you will. But if you look at the content of the bill—and again, I realize that it's a total of 18 pages and it was first introduced almost a year ago; in fact, December 13, 2005. It's struggling. In the public

hearings many of the commenters, the stakeholders in education, were not complimentary. I shall make some of those references in my remarks when I'm speaking in just a few moments.

**1720**

I think the member for Scarborough Southwest, like the rest of us, was passionate about trying to find a solution. No doubt the peace and harmony they've put in the public school system is a positive thing, and I'd be the first to agree with that. But now they're bringing in a bill that has some punitive responses instead of real solutions.

Learning to 18 means—if you look at the preamble of the bill, you'll see that it says, "Understand the education system needs to instil in young people a lasting, positive attitude toward learning that will keep them motivated..."

Some of the actions in this bill do anything but as a positive reinforcement for the value and importance of staying in school and learning, and lifelong learning, which is really the theme today.

So it's in that regard that we have serious problems with this bill; many of the stakeholders as well. I'll be addressing some of the more substantive issues in a couple of minutes.

**Ms. Martel:** In response to the comments that were made by the member, it would be good if some of the members went back and took a look at who actually made presentations and what they meant to say, because many, many of the groups that came before the committee during the course of public hearings expressed serious concerns about this bill. My colleague from Trinity-Spadina already read into the record the concerns that were raised directly with the minister from the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, on November 21. I won't go through those concerns again, but I will just say that they are very legitimate, and I suspect they would be feelings that would be similarly expressed by board after board after board right across this province.

What the government fails to realize and fails to deal with in this bill is that kids don't drop out of school for no reason whatsoever, for fun, on a whim. I don't believe that. They drop out because there are very serious, compelling issues in their lives that need to be dealt with. Those can be issues of poverty, issues of assault at home, issues with respect to addictions, whether to drugs or alcohol, issues with respect to mental health illness. I think these are the things that drive kids to get the sense that the school and others aren't meeting their needs, and so they drop out.

I think it makes much more sense for us to have those kids in a safe learning environment, which is the schools, and actually provide them with the supports they need to deal with the root causes of why they are not engaged in the classroom. The government would have been much better making an investment in those supports, in mental health workers, in addiction counsellors, in psychologists etc. to get at the root problems, to deal with those issues, to keep those kids in school in a safe learning environment.

**Mr. Bas Balkissoon (Scarborough–Rouge River):** I rise with pleasure to give some input to Bill 52, the learning to 18 program.

I chose to speak on this because this bill definitely will make a difference to the young people in my riding. We've had several pilot projects in my riding this year for young people who have dropped out of school and, believe it or not, the success of getting people back in school through those pilot programs has been great. As a result of that, I thought I'd share some of my thoughts on this particular bill.

I'm a walking example of a young man who wanted to drop out of school. As I was growing up, my first cousin was an electrician and I used to follow him around when he was doing houses in the village that I lived in, and I was really interested in becoming an electrician. At age 14, I applied to the local oil company to be an apprentice and I passed the examination, but my brother was a principal of a school at the time and he talked me out of it and kept me in high school till I finished.

Lo and behold, when I finished high school the first thing I did was enter vocational school and I went into the electrical field to become an electrician. Believe it or not, the program that I was in is no different than what the Minister of Education is proposing here, which is a joint program with industry, which is the electrical unions etc., where you go to their school but you also belong to the school system to get your secondary school diploma. That's the exact program I got into. I graduated out of it, came to Canada and here I am today, after I studied in Canada and worked for Bell Canada for many years. I would say I'm a living example of it. I believe that what the minister is doing is right because it worked for me, and I believe it will work for many in my riding. I'm looking forward to voting for this bill.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments?

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Didn't the member for Durham rise before? No?

The member for Erie–Lincoln.

**Mr. Hudak:** I was looking forward to the member for Durham's second round of comments to see if he would contradict his first round of comments or reinforce them, or enter debate with the member from Durham.

I'm pleased to rise, and I always enjoy the comments of my colleague from Scarborough Southwest, who was speaking just a few moments ago, and before that, of Mr. Marchese, the education critic for the third party.

I had the chance, if you recall, to address Bill 52 in my third reading debate comments last week. I still feel that I have the same reservations about the government's approach on education. I did note that a lot of my constituents had grave concerns about the driver's licence provision, which now, I think after a public outcry and opposition by the Progressive Conservatives and New Democrats, has been watered down. But there are a lot of questions outstanding with respect to how some of the programs operating outside the purview of the principal or the school board will be organized.

There are other adjoining issues, as I mentioned. The agreement that was forced upon school boards by then-Education Minister Kennedy has compelled a significant reduction in supervisory time. This means that the teachers are not as available as they had been before for lunchtime supervision, playground supervision, after-school supervision or on-call duties. This has meant that educational assistants who should be with special-needs children have been taken away from those duties. It imposes a new cost, as well, on the school boards, and responsibilities on the principals when they cannot find enough resources to cover those times. So I do hope that the government will listen to the advice they have heard in that respect and respond accordingly to ensure that students have the full availability of services at the schools.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Member for Scarborough Southwest, you have two minutes to respond.

**Mr. Berardinetti:** I appreciate the comments from the various members on what I had to say earlier. I want to briefly address again the concerns that people have about the punitive sections, I guess, that we're trying to put in place.

From what I can read in the bill, there is liability on a parent or guardian who tries to prevent or doesn't allow a person 16 years or older to go to school. The fine is not that great; it's \$200. There's also an exception to that, which is that the court may, instead of imposing the fine, require a personal bond to be placed so that the person can go to school.

The other punitive sections that I looked through speak of those who still don't want to go to school. But again, we're not putting people in jail. We're not saying, "You're 17, and you don't want to go to school. We're going to put you in jail." What we're basically saying is, "We want you to go to school and we, the government, think it's in your best interest to do so." There are a number of exceptions in this section, as well, which exempt people who cannot, or for certain reasons are unable to, go to school between the ages of 16 and 18. They are allowed to be exempt from that.

So it's a fair and balanced approach. You're never going to have a perfect system, but I think this bill just reinforces the point that education is important, and in this province we have made it a high priority. I stand here today fully supportive of Bill 52.

1730

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

**Mr. O'Toole:** It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 52. I want to start by saying that I was looking forward to our critic the member from Oak Ridges, who today is actually involved with Bill 124, the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, so he's unable to make his important leadoff speech. But I am looking forward to it, and in that regard I'll keep my remarks to a limit of 20 minutes.

There are really three themes, perhaps four, that I'd like to cover in my remarks. The first has been covered by some of the previous speakers—I think there's consistent agreement on this; the member from Trinity–Spadina and others have spoken on it. The first issue, of

course, is the quality issue and the accountability issue, if you want to consider that one or two items. That is important. It's a very important part of it: the ability to achieve up to eight credits—equivalency credits, as they call them. I will refer to that section of Bill 52 in the fullness of time.

The other part of the bill is the punitive action part, the enforcement and reprisals if non-compliance is determined. At the end of the day, I'm quite disappointed that the real role of the parent in all of this, and indeed the role of the student—we've got to recognize the importance of young people today; 16 to 18 is certainly at a very important decision-making time in their life and there needs to be some mentoring and respect for that. But if you look at the bill—and I apply it to my own experience—I have to say that most of us try to validate that we have well-informed or at least strongly held views on the importance of public education, and that should be clearly on the record.

That being said, some of the comments I have from my constituents in the riding of Durham—I digress for a moment. Just yesterday, I was very happy, because there's a page from the riding of Durham, Mackenzie Gunn, and her parents and grandparents and family friends were there, and they all appealed to me and said without any provocation that they were so impressed with the pages and the learning program and the stimulation it gave them—there are alternative ways for people today to learn. Perhaps how someone like me learned, sitting in rows and all that—education has to be innovative today to meet the needs of young people. The competition is basically reality television, if you want to put it that way. But I put to you that they are educated, being the parent of five children myself.

It's innovation in education that I would probably, more importantly, like to see the minister spend some time on, trying to engage those people, as she says in the preamble of the speech: "Understand the education system needs to instil in young people a lasting, positive attitude toward learning that will keep them motivated to stay in school until they graduate or turn 18," and, I would say to you, well beyond that. We live in what I'd call an age of learning and an age where it's a knowledge-based economy. Most of the commenters today—indeed, our finance critic, Tim Hudak, often uses that response to the innovation economy. Our young people are that economy. No one should be denied the opportunity.

As I look at all of our children, I must say for the record that I spent a couple of years as a school trustee and as chair of certain committees and all of that, and have a great appreciation for the public education system. My wife, who taught for over 20 years—let's leave it at that—just retired from teaching this past summer and was and still is a lifelong teacher, in the fact that we had five children, one of whom is a high school teacher, did her teacher training and went to Lakehead University for her graduate degree and now is a vice-principal in a high school in London, England. She went there initially just to gain international experience in education and to

further her education, but she is there today. I'd just say that all five children's success in life is attributed to the partnership in learning. It's in that vein that there is a role not just for professional educators, but for the families themselves, and indeed for the community.

I see some changes in education that are important. I'd say that the co-op experience, much like the co-op experience here with the pages, which I mentioned earlier, is real-world experience: them critically watching adults in the world of work or performance in the public sense. In my view, that experience and this innovation are completely missing under my current understanding of Bill 52. If you look at some of the sections—I do want to stay pretty well focused on the themes I mentioned: quality, accountability and the punitive kind of actions that are implied in this bill. I would say this of the bill, as I said of the preamble, which takes about two pages of the bill: It's quite lovely language actually, if that's the appropriate word. But then you look at the rest of the bill. This thing here went out for hearings and was brought back to the House in June 2006, and it's still languishing on the order paper. Why is that? If you were to listen to some of the input that was heard during the committee, MPPs heard from representatives of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and the Ontario College of Teachers. The concern is that if Bill 52 is passed in its current form, it would water down the standards. There it is, by the stakeholders, the professional educators.

It goes on to say that this government is failing to consider many points, but it is the penalties for not staying in school that are of particular concern to families and indeed educators across the province. As I mentioned before, my colleague the member from Oak Ridges, Frank Klees, has said that Bill 52 is hare-brained. That may be stating it in a media-friendly word. In fact, the enforcement divisions here are a whole new regime of education bureaucrats, if you will. But I would say that education must be a lifelong process; it doesn't stop arbitrarily at any age, certainly not at 16 and certainly not at 18 as well. There must be doorways or pathways for young people that aren't perhaps traditional. I can think of a number of different experiences of young people today choosing—they're perhaps bored of the education system. They're very bright young people who just aren't turned on and perhaps turn to other kinds of acting out. Maybe it would be better if they weren't in that particular setting, but they should be in a stimulating learning environment. That may be something they should be consulted on: "What would you like to do?" It may seem a bit progressive, but I believe that is the choice.

If I look at the work that our leader, John Tory, has done even more recently with youth at risk—there was a report earlier on that. More recently, the report that he's just issued deals with trying to bring people into the fullness of our economy. What's the most simple theme to that? The whole educational challenge, the skills training learning that's needed and indeed deficient in this province. He makes some recommendations, working

with TV Ontario and other providers, to make sure there are opportunities outside of the classroom for young people to continue to learn.

The report I'm referring to is *A Time for Action*. As I said before, that report by our leader, John Tory, is his reflections as a former business executive and a very widely respected community participant. He's reaching out. This report has 14 recommendations, many of which focus directly on some of the suggestions that the Minister of Education simply isn't listening to effectively.

The very first recommendation from *A Time for Action* is, "A new online assessment, education and testing initiative to help potential newcomers address the accreditation process...." That very assessment tool should be available to young people to determine what would inspire them to learn further, whether it's the creative arts part, whether it's the technology part—or it's the barriers to the educational system or the predictability in the education system—perhaps education at other times of the day. Some high schools are starting to offer night credits for full-time students. This is the innovation. He goes on to say that some of the barriers—this is Mr. Tory's report and it's our report; I give it out to people who are wondering what are some of the innovative ideas that we have.

Number 6 is "More financial support." Students see the barrier to post-secondary or to credited learning right in the system of OSAP itself. I say that because they had the Bob Rae report, the failed Liberal leader campaign guy. It was widely supported here. It was a great report, I would say to him. They promised—you'd recall this—a hard cap on tuition fees. What did they do? They had the Rae report and they raised them, up to 30%. These are barriers. Children, when they're 16 and 17 and looking ahead, don't see their parents with the resources to do it. Mentally they develop barriers and it's those barriers that we should be working on.

**1740**

The member from Trinity-Spadina, in his remarks, spent a fair amount of time talking about the social infrastructure for children at risk. I couldn't agree more. He speaks passionately about that, and quite knowledgeably as well about that particular topic. There's a failure here, through the hearings, over the last year of these hearings, and the stakeholders are all saying that this bill simply doesn't get it.

If I look at my own riding and what I've been hearing there—and last week, our finance critic from Erie-Lincoln went on to talk about parent participation in this debate. In my own riding, I've had a number of e-mails, a broad number of e-mails, and I'm going to relate those to the viewers tonight because I think it's an important third-party parent perspective, non-partisan. I quite frankly will say here openly that I don't know Linda and Larry Wescott any more than that they e-mailed me. They're a home-schooled family, and this is their observation. I quote this for Hansard:

"Many home-schoolers complete their formal training before age 18. (Although they do not have a diploma that would be recognizable by the ministry.) Without being

able to provide proof of attendance at a school, they will be unable to attain a driver's licence."

That has been slightly modified in the amendments that I referred to earlier, but that threat is still there to force them to comply. These are involved parents, home-schooling parents, fully engaged with the development options and potential for their children. Mr. and Mrs. Wescott also went on to say:

"We feel that laws passed in our province should protect the rights of all citizens of this province. We feel that any changes to current legislation should focus on providing support of choice to individuals as they work through their choice of secondary education and [move] on to post-secondary and post-educational destinations." Again, the point is about choice. That should be, in a free and democratic society, their right. I'm not speaking to that in any partisan way; I'm saying that has been outlawed.

If you don't think that's a pertinent comment, Mr. Speaker, in today's *National Post* there's quite a good article. It's in the *National Post*, page A16. The title is "Union Alliances Plague School Board, Trustee Says." This is directly from the article. It says, "A Toronto District School Board trustee says unions helped cause October's budget crisis and will continue to interfere with boardroom politics through their aggressive campaigns against" any "spending cuts...."

"Campaigning on a promise to reject union endorsement, Mr. Goodman," who was one of the trustee candidates, "was on the receiving end of CUPE attack ads. He says he was offered union support in return for signing a pledge not to cut staff or close schools," and he refused, but he went on to win.

This is the point: the politicization of the classroom, which has many, many parents and indeed students frustrated. If you think of extracurricular activities, sports activities, being terminated because of some work-related issue, it's completely unfair to the future, the potential and the enthusiasm of those young people. That's an article worth looking at for balance.

I would say that another parent spoke to me, or actually e-mailed me: Nancy Blakely, who is from the neighbouring riding in Northumberland. She sent an e-mail that reads as follows:

"For whatever reason, it may be necessary for a grade 12 student to take a semester off.... If a student is unable to complete a semester, they should be able to work for those four or five months and at least be productive members of our society, earning money and supporting themselves while they prepare for the next semester."

Ms. Blakely also writes, "The Liberals argue that they will make exception for extraordinary circumstances. But this will take months to process, and by the time an exception is made, the youth will have lost their job. And, as the youth is almost 18 at the time that this happens, they will likely turn 18" before the government even gets the paperwork done.

It is true that they're building a whole enforcement bureaucracy tracking students' progress and behaviour.

It's completely inappropriate. The resources should be with the student. That's what has been called for.

Another constituent, Carla MacDonald Everill, made this statement in an e-mail to the previous Minister of Education that she shared with me: "At what point did you decide that you had the right to discipline my children and to decide what path they wish to walk in their lives?" She also made this request, which I am pleased to relay to the government with my full support, I should say, and I quote her: "I hope that you will stop this bill and allow the families of this province to raise their own children without constant, unwarranted interference from an excessively intrusive government."

There you have it. These are unsolicited and freely submitted comments from my constituents in the riding of Durham. That is together with some of the other comments made by the member from Erie-Lincoln and the member from Oak Ridges and other speakers who are concerned that this bill fails to address quality and accountability, as well as student input.

The choices that I've referred to are sort of off base—they're just not with it—as if Dalton knows best. That's the kind of attitude that I've found. Perhaps "arrogant" or "self-absorbed" would be another way of expressing it, that they think that he's the education minister. Well, you'd ask yourself, how is it working? They've put a lot of money into it. I agree with that. How much has actually found its way into innovative solutions? If I look for innovative solutions, there have been none.

The member from Scarborough Southwest went on to say things that I'm sure he'll live to regret. The missing piece here is the real choice thing, and looking at barriers to destinations.

I'm also going to refer to another third party, the Globe and Mail article today talking about innovative solutions: "Six Years in Manitoba Buys a Free Education." Imagine telling a 16- or 17-year-old student, "Under this plan, a graduate of a four-year science program who paid \$13,258 in tuition would get \$7,955 back over a period of years. That same student would also have received \$3,498 in tuition tax credits and \$3,379 in education tax credits during the four years of study, for a total of \$14,832 in possible earned-income credits."

There is no barrier. The student aged 16 or 17 making pathway choices now doesn't see a financial barrier to their post-secondary career learning or trade learning, to go on and find and pick and choose choices.

I'm all for the parents and the students being consulted but, more importantly, being mentored if there is weakness in the family setting for whatever reason. As the member from Trinity-Spadina said, mentorship of some sort is important: making sure that they don't get lost in the shuffle without the resources and confidence that they can do it.

I cannot speak for anyone but myself, but I am convinced—we're waiting for the comments from our education critic, the member from Oak Ridges, Frank Klees, who is passionate about education—

**Interjection:** Passionate?

**Mr. O'Toole:** Passionate, and committed, I might say, in the broadest sense.

When you think of education, the most important thing you should think of is not the fancy, glib speeches. "Learning to 18" is a nice sort of sound bite. What are the solutions, what are the results and what are the initiatives that this government has taken? There are threats and intimidation and reduction of standards. That's what the bill actually says. It's what the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and the Ontario College of Teachers have said. There really isn't much room to move in this bill. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for us to support it.

That being said, we would agree that education is the only vertical mobility opportunity for young people. We shouldn't be creating disincentives and barriers. We should be creating hope and opportunity, and that's something that's missing from the bill. There is no plan here, as in most things. They would say almost anything—we've seen that in the last two days in response to the auditor's report. They've neglected the children in the care of children's aid services. In fact, there are things here, in public education, where spending is somewhat not accountable. Saying one thing and doing another is not something that children should be modelling after, especially when you have a Premier who said so many things prior to the election and failed to keep those commitments. What lesson is that teaching our children?

I know that our leader, John Tory, is a person who is committed to doing what he says, and we as a caucus will support that. I've made reference to his many reports but, more importantly, the most recent reports on gateways and pathways for people. That's why I think a better alternative would be to look at our party in the next government.

**1750**

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions and comments? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

**Mr. Marchese:** Speaker, I have to tell you, through you to everyone, that there is something in this Bill 52 that has a flavour of a Conservative kind of proclivity. I was so surprised when the Liberals introduced this bill that I thought, "Isn't this interesting?" Then, to find, of all surprises, that the Tories and New Democrats were on the same side—I couldn't believe it. I thought, "How could the Conservative Party not support a bill that, under normal circumstances, they would be the authors of such a thing?" Imagine my surprise. John, you understand what I'm saying? Here's something that the Tories would have done had they been in power. They're out of power because they're in opposition now. So the Liberals introduce a dumb bill—to be fair to you, I don't know how else to say it—and the Tories are opposing it.

Here's the other question: Do the Tories oppose the equivalent learning opportunity, which offers a parallel private educational program system? I would think that the Tories would like that. That's the only thing left in the bill. It appears to me that the Tories are opposing that, which is fascinating. I love to see the Tories in opposition—I do—because when they're in opposition, you



just don't know where they stand, right? It's humorous; it's certainly interesting. So if you're opposing this bill still, even though the only thing this government has put into this bill is the equivalent learning program, God bless. The Tories and New Democrats are on the same page.

I'm interested to hear from the member from Durham, waiting with anxiety almost to hear what the critic for education for the Conservative Party is going to say whenever he's going to speak for the full hour. So I'm looking forward to that.

**Mr. Bill Mauro (Thunder Bay–Atikokan):** I'm happy to rise and remark on the comments made by the member from Durham and to thank him a little bit for what was, I guess, much closer to an objective commentary on Bill 52 than has been provided by other members of the Legislature, especially the member from Trinity–Spadina. His one-hour speech is in stark contrast to that which we've heard from other members of the Legislature. There seems to be a bit of a pattern developing from that member, which is rather unfortunate.

Today, at the beginning of question period, the leader of the official opposition in his questioning took leave to shine a light on the wonderful work we've done in providing new powers to the Auditor General. In his questions to the Premier, in his second or third supplementary, he found the time to stop and say, "We're thankful and we're very happy with what you've done. We think it has been a great idea." I see the same pattern existing in the comments from the member from Durham.

I recall, in my first year or two here, that the member from Trinity–Spadina was a little more objective than he seems to be in the last little while. He seems to be sliding into a bit of a pattern in the last little while that was not there at the beginning of the term. I don't know what's going on. Perhaps there's an election closing in. He seems to be reaching out and pandering to certain groups that he thinks—

**Mr. Marchese:** Pandering?

**Mr. Mauro:** Pandering. Yes, it was an unfortunate hour. I would have expected it would have been more well spent.

Like most other members of this Legislature, I have met with all of the relevant stakeholders involved in this particular legislation—the teachers, the teachers' unions, the principals, the EAs. We've met with all of them, and I can tell you, the consistent message that's coming back from all of those relevant stakeholder groups is that they cannot be more thrilled with any government in the last recent history of the province in terms of what we have done for education in Ontario. They're thrilled to have us. Nothing's perfect.

**Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer (Kitchener–Waterloo):** I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Durham. He made a very fine speech and indicated his keen concern for young people in the province of Ontario and his desire that any changes that are made would be in the best interests of those young people. Throughout the time that I've known my colleague, he has always had a

keen interest in young people and has always supported whatever might be in their best interests. In this case, of course, we're speaking to somehow keeping young people in school, so to say, until age 18. This was an issue, by the way, that our government did start to address in the last years that we were in office, in 2002 and 2003. We were very, very concerned about the students who do drop out, the students that we called students at risk. Our plan was not like this particular plan, but our plan was to make sure that we started to identify these children as early as we could in life, those students who might at some point later on drop out. We had set up a committee that included the stakeholders, teachers, principals. In fact, one of the leaders of our committee was an outstanding principal from the Kingston community. But obviously we all need to make a commitment to make sure that our students remain in school, that they have the skills, they have the training and they have the education that will allow them to succeed in life. So it is important, and, as I say, obviously our critic will express the concerns about this legislation.

**Ms. Martel:** The member for Durham talked about folks who came to the committee who had concerns about the bill. I just want to read into the record two of the briefing notes from OECTA, October 2006: "Certified teachers must assess student learning for credit purposes exclusively."

November 16, 2006, another bulletin from OECTA: "OECTA believes that all secondary school credits must be assessed by certified teachers."

**Mr. Marchese,** do you think that Mr. Mauro told those teachers who came to meet with him that it's very clear that in the bill there is no guarantee that certified teachers are going to be assessing these programs? I bet you he didn't. So, for the record, here's what happened in committee.

November 2, my colleague Mr. Marchese said to legal counsel, Madam Goldberg, "Can I ask you, is this the section where we would know whether the programs offered would be by certified teachers, or is there another section that will deal with it later?" Madam Goldberg said, "I believe that it would be in the policies, standards and guidelines that will be issued under this section." So Mr. Marchese said again, "Wait a minute. I want to know. Is it going to be certified teachers or not?" and she said again, "If that's done"—that meaning, if certified teachers are going to be asked and are going to be able to deal with these problems—"it will be through those policies. I can't tell you right now what those policies"—blah, blah, blah—"are going to be."

So what is clear is, there is nothing in the bill that guarantees that secondary school credits will be assessed by certified teachers. I wonder how many of the Liberals who have been meeting with teachers from OECTA and OSSTF have been telling them that particular detail.

**The Deputy Speaker:** For the record, the member for Nickel Belt would know that questions and comments are intended to be directed to the speech given by the person who had the floor, and not become part of the debate.

You have now two minutes to respond, the member for Durham.

**Mr. O'Toole:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for defending me. I appreciate that.

I'm just going to thank individual speakers.

The member from Trinity–Spadina called this a dumb bill. He has the right to say what he thinks, and I think that reflects on some of the comments I made.

The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan: I want to thank you. It's a compliment, because I did try to not interfere with the potential and the opportunity for our young people. That's the whole point of this debate tonight.

The member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who has just left, is a former Minister of Education. In fact, as a school trustee and chair of the Waterloo board of education, she was proclaimed "educator of the year" by teachers, educators, administrators and, I believe, students.

The member from Nickel Belt spoke to the comments from OECTA and others that were not supportive of the bill in the committee hearings that were held.

Do you want to know how important this is? I just attended the Durham Prosperity Initiative—this is from Durham region—and the booklet that was produced calls

it a prosperity conference. It was actually organized and facilitated by a number of students from the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, a wonderful group of innovative young people looking for real solutions to real problems of the economy: Munish Chopra, Christian Cox, Stephanie Heathcote, Brian Renaud, Matt Simpson and Michele Lee Wanhoy.

I would say one of the more important observations was with respect to this bill. It's related. It says "Major items discussed." Under "Training," it says "need for societal change in attitude"—I'm summarizing here—"forge stronger partnerships with the business community, skilled trades, universities and colleges; create more incentives for students to finish high school; educate students; reduce barriers for students and new Canadians; educate the public about the shortage of skilled trades; and emphasize opportunity to become available to participate in the economy."

There's more to be done and this bill doesn't go far enough. I don't think—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you. It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 10 o'clock, Thursday, December 7.

*The House adjourned at 1801.*

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