



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 24 February 2010

Mercredi 24 février 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 February 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 février 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Baha'i prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENERGY CONSUMER
PROTECTION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PROTECTION
DES CONSOMMATEURS D'ÉNERGIE

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 17, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 235, An Act to enact the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and to amend other Acts / Projet de loi 235, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et modifiant d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: Speaker, I was at the tail end of my 20 minutes, and I believe I've got about three or four minutes left. I wanted to do a little bit of a wrap-up by reviewing the issues that I brought before the House in regard to Bill 235, the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010.

What we talked about were the seven key problems that were identified by the public for the retailers, which were: salespersons' practices at the door—consumers don't have the information they need to decide because of language barriers; verbal contracts, usually by phone; contracts not with an account holder; consumers feeling pressured into signing a contract at the door—pressure tactics; unfair cancellation policies and fees; automatic renewal of gas contracts; electricity retailers and gas marketers not having accountability because they put third party collectors in there, and we need to have them culpable for their actions. Fixed contracts don't clearly disclose all the costs or offer products promoting conservation.

Those kinds of issues during that particular section of the bill were explained both by the minister and by myself. We now move to suite metering, which allows us to identify some of the problems there, which were: no framework to install suite metering in rental apartment buildings, no rules for individual billing in rental apartment buildings, and the like. The other one is regarding

deposits and disconnections, which was important, and that is that gas and electricity companies work under different rules regarding invoices, disconnecting and security charges, which this bill will address.

The bill will not cover all the issues that I'm sure the opposition and others, including ourselves, would want to discuss. It's not the kind of bill that is somewhat of an omnibus bill, but as I indicated, I as parliamentary assistant have an extreme willingness to listen to concerns and to the issues. I reinforce one more time that we will definitely be going into committee and having the stakeholders and the public at large make presentations. One more point that I made clear to the opposition when they asked was that we will definitely be doing a consultation when we deal with the regulatory stream that accompanies the bill.

I do look forward to further debate, further discussion, further issues that need to be raised. And as parliamentary assistant to the previous minister, I make the same commitment today; that is, I will engage in a listening exercise and make sure that if good ideas will help us make it a better bill, I will be encouraging all staff to participate in that activity to ensure that we do protect consumers in a bill where we say we are trying to protect the consumer.

Having said that, I will wait for the responses from the opposition and from my members, and look forward to continuation of the debate.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to respond to this important bill. The member from Brant, as I recall, summarized some of his concerns. I do want to acknowledge that I hope to have the opportunity to speak on this this morning. There are so many people on our side of the House who are here and want to speak—well, one of them is actually leaving now.

One of the things, the sub-metering, does become an issue. When you get into the apartments, many of which are not efficient, the actual discretionary use—discretionary use at time—is very important. A lot of them are seniors—not all but a lot. A lot have income—not all; I don't like to generalize with any particular group. A lot are often in a situation where they don't have a lot of control.

The real treachery of the smart meter itself is that it is really not a smart meter. I see Phil here. He's an engineer; he knows. A smart meter would allow you to remotely turn on and off appliances such as hot water heaters or air conditioners. That's a smart meter. This is

actually a time-of-use meter. It's a disguise, because—and people of Ontario should pay attention here—they're actually raising the price of electricity. When you use electricity on-peak, you're going to pay twice as much for it. They're saying you should use it off-peak. If you don't have full control with timers and other devices to switch the load usage, you're going to be paying more.

So what I can tell you is that, for sure, this bill does the right thing with respect to retailers knocking on your door and demanding certain information—some of it you should not give them, by the way. It's going to put an end to and solve that. But the poison pill here is the smart meter issue itself. I'm in support of the bill, because it takes care of the issue of people knocking on your door and causing you headaches, but at the same time there's always a poison pill in every piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm looking forward to hearing the comments from the member for Durham, because his comments around sub-metering appear to make sense to me—I'm not sure what the government has to say about that. But he's got 20 minutes coming up soon, and I find that commentary interesting.

All I wanted to say to the member from Brant is that I really appreciate when a parliamentary assistant says, "I will be listening to what deputants have to say, and what opposition parties have to say, with a view to making changes or lobbying for change, if necessary." I find that very useful to hear. Generally, very few changes are made in committee by the governing party; that's just the way it has been historically. But I find it encouraging when a parliamentary assistant says, "I want to listen to good ideas, and if they're good ideas, I want to lobby for those kinds of changes." That is good.

The member from Oakville, in two committees I was at, did make an effort as well on some issues, I have to admit. On others he was a bit reluctant, and I understand that; his minister was even more reluctant than he.

But when members make an effort—that is, the parliamentary assistants—to hear the arguments and then to carry those arguments to the minister, saying, "There were good arguments to be made. Why can't we do that?" that's the most you can expect of them. I just wanted to thank the member from Brant for saying that.

0910

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: Being from Ottawa–Orléans, primarily a bedroom community of single-family homes, the energy retailers are the big issue in our area. I'm very pleased that this bill is coming forward, because we received, as did all members, a lot of complaints about practices which were not acceptable.

Parts of the process will be information brochures and Ontario Energy Board telephone service in 21 languages, key information required in large font on the first page of the contract, explanatory information on energy bills and improved safeguards for customers. Contract signatures

must be text-based and not simply provided over the phone; a third party is to contact the customer to ensure contracts were wilfully entered into. A standard script will be required for contracts, verifications and renewals. Automatic renewals will not be permitted, and there will be enhanced cancellation policies and capped charges. There will be higher standards for the industry. All employees who deal with the public will be required to meet training standards. The OEB will appoint a director to ensure companies abide by the act. The OEB will provide reports to the minister on enforcement action.

All these, when they come into effect, will protect the people at the door. I mean, the stories—we've all heard them—about signing contracts with two different companies, the pressure tactics, asking for your energy bill, looking as if they were there from the government sometimes—all these things will be controlled in the new act and will protect the homeowners.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Oakville, you were standing for that?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I will pass.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend from Oakville for that indulgence. I wanted to come into this House because I've received something and I have a particular issue around energy retailers, where I've received a letter personally from a company called Bond Street Collections Inc., and they tell me that I owe a bill to a company called Just Energy Ontario LP, formerly Ontario Energy Savings LP. They're telling me that I owe them money, plus interest, and that they're going to send me to a collection agency. They say, "If you just pay this amount"—a company that I have never signed a contract with—"we'll waive the interest and the fees." And then conveniently, at the bottom, they're asking me to jot down the name on my utility invoice, the address, the utility provider and my utility account number. And it says, "Average rate during your contractual period: 39.3" square metres or something, and to lock in now at a price, to sign and date it, on a little thing they can detach.

This has got to stop. I'm waiting for the energy retailers to come to this place—I understand they're having a reception—because I want to talk to them about this. I've never signed a contract with this company, I have never had anybody send me to a collection company and I find this to be particularly misleading.

There is a need for a reform in this province of these practices and we are going to protect the consumers in this province, because this stuff has got to stop. I want to thank the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure for bringing this bill in. If there is anything in this House that everyone is going to vote for unanimously, it's going to be about this reform, because this reform is well overdue. Put them on notice that this stuff is going to stop, because our constituents, our consumers, are fed up with this. That's why we brought this bill in and I hope we all vote for it. I'm sure we will.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Brant, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Dave Levac: After that, I'm sure that everyone will stand up and vote in favour of the bill, for sure.

I want to thank the member from Durham, obviously, and the member from Trinity–Spadina for his kind words. I hope he keeps my feet to the fire with my commitment to him and to the rest of this House. The member from Ottawa–Orléans has a very strong background on this portfolio, and I thank him for his comments, and obviously the Minister of Revenue, for revving me up and making sure that we get that bill passed.

I do have a couple of quick comments, and I do look forward to the member from Durham's—I think he has negotiated the opportunity to speak. I'm getting the nod that he has finally been given the okay. I do want to correct one thing that he did say, and I hope he would acknowledge that we need to have that correction out there. We're not doubling the cost during peak time; that's the set price. We're giving a reduction in price when you do the off-peak time for energy use. I'm sure he would not want to inflame the seniors out there, thinking that we are going to double their cost; that's not correct. What we are going to do is set the price, and then, if you use off-time energy, you get a cost reduction. That's the hope of this.

I do look forward to his comments on the so-called poison pill part of the bill. I don't characterize it that way. I suggest to him very respectfully that this is a new way of doing things. It offers us an opportunity to learn how to conserve energy and gives us assistance in doing so, for those who are able.

One of the things I know that the member from Trinity–Spadina and his colleagues in the NDP mentioned are apartments and the condition they are in. There are going to be some other retrofit programs outside of this piece of legislation that encourage people to fix their apartment buildings so that we can find savings there, too.

I look forward to the continuation of the debate and I thank all the members for participating in this particular part.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: They did give him a chance.

Mr. John O'Toole: Someone has to make sure there's a voice here to be contributing to this important bill.

I should put on the record right away that our critic, Mr. Yakabuski, has made it very clear that substantively we are in support of the bill. I guess we could end it there and adjourn until 10:30, but I'm going to use the time to represent my constituents in the riding of Durham and raise just some of the small questions.

Yes, the smart meter—the time-of-use meter—is in this bill, under the sub-metering. Sub-metering refers to apartment buildings, some of which today have one big meter. Electricity comes into the building and the charges incurred on that meter will be spread amongst the 10 or 20 or 100 units in the building. That's basically how it

works. The discretionary problem that is there is that the tenant is a price taker. The landlord, by the Tenant Protection Act, has some ability to spread these costs over each unit. But one unit could have the windows open and the oven on, or be heating the apartment with the oven, and yet the one that is trying to be conscious of the environment and is conserving would have to pay. So it's a good idea, probably, to sub-meter.

But there may be investments required by the landlord. I hope they can pass those on to the tenants as part of the rent increases, and they will, because that's a provision that they apply to the Assessment Review Board, I think it is, and the board can approve those rate increases, which could be improving the efficiency and the safety and those kinds of provisions within the apartment.

Often—and I'm not going to characterize all the landlords as being from the past; I think that some of them are quite good. They're investments, by the way. They have to take care of the building to the extent that it's an investment for them that should generate some sort of return. But they often have very poor insulation, often have very poor windows, often don't have the most efficient appliances—those kinds of things. So even if the appliances, say, are supplied, they're probably the cheapest ones you can get. They're not Energy Star rated, probably. Hopefully, I'm not generalizing too much here. But that means that the tenant is going to be disadvantaged because of the windows and the insulation and inefficient things.

Now, here's the real thing for general consumers in Ontario. If you look at your electricity bill, which is what this is really about at the end of the day—we do want to get rid of these retailers, these people knocking on the door and infringing on your privacy etc.—that's for sure. But at the end of the day, this is really a more serious debate about energy itself and the cost of it.

0920

I want to commend Andrea Horwath, the leader of the NDP, who raised a very, very good question yesterday, and that was with respect to the HST. I know that the Minister of Revenue—the minister of increasing taxes—is here this morning, and he will probably respond to it in his two minutes, but we've done some calculations. If you are using, say, \$100 worth of electricity, you're going to be paying \$8 more. Let's say it's only \$100 a week for your utilities. Okay, that's going to be \$8 a week. Stay with me here. How many weeks in a year? Fifty two. Eight times 52 is four hundred and some dollars—\$416. That's just one thing.

Let's say you commute to work, or let's say you have to have physiotherapy once a week: 8% on every one of those expenditures. Let's say that your expenditures, on a monthly basis—let's just be civilized here—are \$1,000. That's 8% on \$1,000 for these discretionary expenditures, including electricity, natural gas, physiotherapy—you name it. Ms. Horwath raised it: It's going to cost \$225 a year for electricity and natural gas.

Now, the minister is probably going to say, "You're going to get \$300 back." Well, that's also income-tested. If you have income over \$80,000, they claw it back.

Hon. John Wilkinson: And then you get your income tax cut.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, yes, then you get your income tax cut. Well, it actually increases your income. No, it's not taxable, I'm led to believe.

But I want to stay on line. Here's the key: All of us want clean, safe, reliable energy. There's no question of that—we all want that—and we want it to be affordable as well. I believe that electricity is an essential commodity. It's not discretionary consumption like cable television; it's an essential commodity.

The discretionary use of energy is another shell game. Conservation is when you don't use electricity—you don't dry your clothes using electricity. That's conservation. When you choose to use a timer so that your dryer goes on in the middle of the night when electricity is cheaper, that's not conservation; that's load shifting. Conservation is when you don't use it. That's conserving it; that's real conservation. In other words, getting a clothesline and putting clothes outside is conservation.

My point here is that if you look at a normal couple, let's say a senior couple, it isn't that much; it's roughly 1,000 kilowatt hours a month of electricity. That's a generalization, but it's roughly that amount. The discretionary amount, according to technical reports, is about 8% of usage. That means turning the light off and not using the air conditioning, or a ventilator, if you happen to have a problem.

If you have electric heat, you're euchred, and most of these apartments with sub-metering have electric heat. You can't be turning that on and off because it's 3 o'clock in the afternoon and rates are very high—it's not quite double, but it's higher. At 3 o'clock in the morning, electricity will be quite cheap. So you have to look at the fairness of this issue.

I'm respectfully suggesting that you're going to use less electricity—I'm all for conservation, by the way—and you're going to be paying more. What the minister is going to say to you is, "Look, we can tell you how to save on your electricity bill. Look at your smart meter. Go to your computer. You'll be able to see a profile of usage and it will show you"—I'm sure there will be little subroutines on the program to show you that if you use your dishwasher and your clothes dryer at night or off-peak times, you could save money.

They're going to say to you, once you get these smart meters up and running, "Look, if you want to save, get some timers and shift that load to off-peak so it's cheaper." So it's your fault that you're using all this energy to cook your meals, have your shower in the morning and in the evening, bathe the children and wash your clothes. Busy families out working all day and coming home have no discretion. They have to cook the food, heat the house and maintain their personal hygiene etc. I don't think there's very much discretionary use.

As I said before, we see the devil is in the detail—not specifically this bill. I want to put this on the record. There's no question that we want to see significant changes and improvements, and I think the bill attempts

to achieve that. The bill is long overdue. In fact, the bill was promised in 2008-09.

I want to give Dave Ramsay, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane—he used to be the Minister of Natural Resources. He's not a minister anymore. I don't know about that, either. He brought in a bill, and his bill would have easily improved things. The government has copied his bill. It says here—a similar bill last year that the government could have worked in, instead of choosing to let it die on the order paper, in favour of a government bill. So he actually had the same bill, and they've copied it, but didn't give him credit for it. I don't understand that.

We're largely supportive. I think it's important that there is training and oversight for these retail salespeople. I think that's good. The training and the whole marketing of it, I think, should be left to the retailers, meaning the local distribution companies, whether it's Hydro One or Meridian or Toronto Hydro. I think they would have a marketing plan there to give people some marketing choices. I think that would be good.

Direct Energy is generally in support of the bill. That's good to hear. They note that because the electricity prices are regulated by the province—and this is important because, really, the Ontario Energy Board regulates the price—these retailers are sort of hedging against future price changes. But the most part of the bill is not regulated by these retailers—the debt retirement charge, the delivery charge and the line loss charge. Those are three charges in the bill that many of the consumers don't look at.

Line loss is when the dispatcher, OPG, shoots out electricity across the grid—they fire out one kilowatt of energy, they get paid for it, but by the time it gets to your house, there's only half left. There's a 10% to 15% line loss on electricity. That's the line loss charge. You'll see a charge on your bill: It's 0.00123 or 0.00145 or something like that. The consumer is actually paying it. To get this electricity to you, they had to dispatch more energy than you actually use, so you have to pay for it. That makes sense, I guess.

The other one is the debt retirement charge, and it's called the provincial benefit. Now that's really an important issue. For small business that has gone into setting up conservation and load management within their facility—there's one in my riding. I'll mention the name. It's Bowmanville. It's a foundry, and they have smelters that are electrical. They set up their whole operation to be off-peak so that they'd get a lower distribution rate. Now that they've done all this and put in some modernization and tooling and stuff like that, their provincial benefit charge has gone up. In fact, I've written to Mr. Duguid, who—prior to that, I think it was George Smitherman. There have been so many different Ministers of Energy over there. I think they should put Mr. Wilkinson in that job, because he has been a pretty good minister. He's done a great job of selling the HST.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: And it's hard to sell.

Mr. John O'Toole: You can't sell that. That's like trying to push a rope uphill.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: He's telling the truth.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not buying it. That's one thing we're not buying on this side. It's a shell game.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, perhaps you could—they're yelling at me now.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Often that just ignites the flames, so you want to be quiet on that one.

I think the stranded debt issue is something that many consumers ask all of us. There's the Ontario electricity financing authority—look on the public accounts, look online, look in the budget. If you look under that, you'll see that the total amount of debt owed by what was the old Ontario Hydro is around \$17 billion. It's going down, but—each of us pay 0.07 cents per kilowatt hour of debt retirement charge. On your bill, you'll see it. That's what it's for. My question to the Minister of Energy, and perhaps his parliamentary assistant in the response could tell us, is when is that debt going to be paid?

0930

It's just another tax. Where did it come from? I'm wandering around here a bit. This is very important. If you want the history of this, Mr. Speaker—you've been here longer than I have—you would know that the NDP, when it was under Bob Rae, got into trouble on electricity—a lot of trouble. Energy went to about 12 cents a kilowatt hour. They finally froze it. Once they froze it, costs kept going up and they created a great amount of debt.

There was a lot of debt created when they built the nuclear plants. What happened is that they looked at—

Hon. John Wilkinson: It was all spent in your riding.

Mr. John O'Toole: Do you know who did the report? It was Donald Macdonald, Pierre Elliott Trudeau's finance commissioner. That's who did the report—great guy. He did a great report; it was called the MacDonald commission. What he did is he looked at the amount of assets that old Ontario Hydro had and the amount of liabilities it had. What it did is, it apportioned a certain amount of assets—

Hon. John Wilkinson: In Durham region.

Mr. John O'Toole: Generating facilities generally—Niagara Falls and some of the coal and gas and other fossil fuel plants—and then they said, “You can take on a certain amount of debt.” Then they took the transmission, which used to be part of it, and made it Hydro One. They allocated a certain amount of capital and a certain amount of debt to Hydro One, and that's why this debt retirement charge is left over. It was stranded debt that no one could pay. The assets would not support the amount of debt, and it was just poorly managed until we got in there and tried to sort this out. I think it's being worked on. I'd say the government is following our advice quite well.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, they haven't changed a thing. Have they deamalgamated Toronto? I don't think so. You guys haven't changed as much as you think.

But I do believe this: We've all agreed to getting rid of these retailers at the front door. In my final—I might seek more time here because I'm not going to have enough time to finish all my arguments.

I know the Minister of Revenue mentioned a specific case, and I do sympathize. It's just energy that he—he should check some of his BlackBerry records or maybe phone records. Maybe he got a call from a retailer on his BlackBerry and accepted the call. As such, that would be the first step in a contract, a contractual relationship where someone phones you, you answer the phone and say, “Yes.” It could be implied that you've actually accepted the dialogue, that you're somehow engaged here.

I would say that these collection agencies are another whole deal, but I'm happy to say that they have increased the claims limit in Small Claims Court. Some of this stuff should be settled in civil court, I believe—some of these untoward agencies.

There are a couple of other things here, because I have read the bill, actually. It's in the section here that I'm talking about: “The bill amends the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.” That's section 3 here. It's in the section under the explanatory notes. Here is what it says: “The minister may issue cabinet approved directives to the board in relation to retailing of gas and electricity and the board shall implement the directives.”

Let's face it; let's be clear here: The Minister of Energy is running it. In fact, Mr. Duguid is running it on behalf of the Premier, because they know that energy, whether it's oil—read the books on peak oil. Prices are going up. They're not going down; they are going up. I'm forecasting now—if you look at Bill 150, the Green Energy Act, I'm surprised people in Ontario aren't catching on to this stuff. Here's what they're doing. I like the sound of wind energy. I like—well, no, I don't; it's a low-decibel noise. Solar energy: They're paying these generators 80 cents a kilowatt hour. Wait a minute. How can you pay someone 80 cents to generate it and the consumer is only paying five cents? What's going on here? What's the average price of electricity? It's about five and a half cents per kilowatt hour. How can you pay for wind energy at 20 cents a kilowatt hour under a standard offer under Bill 150, on a feed-in tariff? They call it a FIT.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Thirteen cents.

Mr. John O'Toole: Let's say it's 15 cents. How can you pay them 15 cents and be charging the consumer five cents? That's not fair. In fact, no, you should pay the price for what it is. I'm all for it, but we'll find out how many people want to buy 80-cent energy.

They always refer to Denmark. Do you know what the average price of energy in Denmark is? Thirty-four cents a kilowatt hour. So no wonder people conserve. They can't afford it. That's why they're conserving.

I think there's a lot of good in this bill and it's the first step to getting it right, but I'll tell you, be prepared. The consumers of Ontario, I put to you now: Solar power is about 50 cents a kilowatt hour; wind is about 15 cents a

kilowatt hour. These contracts are going to be honoured. They're standard offer contracts. They're outside the grid price, and you're paying for it in the taxes. We're doing things in Ontario that I don't think are fair to the consumer because, as I said, electricity is a non-discretionary consumption. In other words, you have to eat to live and all those things take energy. So you're going to pay more and you're going to use less.

This bill only helps the guy knocking on your door bothering you to sign a contract. Why are people wanting to sign these contracts? Because they find the price of energy exorbitant. I can't blame all of that on the Premier, but I'd like to. There's a time and a place but I'm waiting to see if anyone has a response to this. I've run out of time to make any more substantive arguments.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to say how touched I have been by the remarks made by the member of Durham. His concern for tenants is good and I think it's due to political corrections. You know how there are market corrections in the system? Political corrections are equally good. When you're moved away from government and are in opposition, you learn so much more. You learn to worry about people, as the member from Durham is expressing his concern for tenants, and this is good. That's what I call political correction. How long the political correction takes is hard to say, but in some cases it takes a long time.

But I could see how much learning there is in many of the members of the Conservative Party. Remember, and I will speak to this briefly as I speak next, that this is the party that deregulated the market. Of course, the Liberals are continuing with that deregulated market and are trying to correct it seven and a half years later, and to the extent that this little correction is coming, it's a good thing. But mostly, this was to simply say thanks to the member of Durham for worrying about many of the tenants.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise in support of Bill 235. I think when you see a bill like this, the Energy Consumer Protection Act, you realize that it's not a philosophical bill; it very much is a sort of operational bill that's going to protect—it's a practical bill. It's going to help people in their homes. It's going to help ordinary and everyday individuals deal with what has become an increasing problem.

I think those problems have been outlined quite well by the previous speakers, but certainly you've seen in the past three years that retailers of energy have cracked the top 10 list of consumer complaints that are currently received by the Ministry of Consumer Services, and there's a number of problems that go along with that. Those problems include salespersons' practices; there's a lack of consumer information; there are some language barriers that need to be overcome. Often they try to do the business over the phone, obviously, and it's a verbal con-

tract that ends up being entered into. That's just not good enough for this type of an arrangement. Consumers often feel pressured into signing these agreements.

So for all these problems that have been brought forward by people over the years, we have solutions that are contained in this bill. If this bill receives the support of the House, consumers in Ontario will receive the protection they need. That also extends into things like suite metering, into consumer security deposits, into disconnection fees as well, so all the everyday issues that ordinary Ontarians face when they deal with an energy retailer over the changing electricity market are going to be included in this bill, with the intent of protecting the consumer. That's what I was trying to say at the start, that it appears this bill is going to receive support from the House. I think that's a good thing, because I think consumer protection crosses party lines. This bill deserves the support of all members.

0940

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to commend my colleague the member for Durham for speaking this morning on short notice and expounding eloquently on the subject that he did, on Bill 235. Certainly it is our intention to support this bill in principle.

The member, in his comments, talked about wind energy, and I wanted to inform the House of a proposal for a wind farm in the Belwood area of my riding, proposed by Inver Energy Canada. They're proposing to build between 25 and 35 wind turbines, and of course they are seeking approval under the process set out by the Green Energy Act, which is a bill that I actually voted against.

I had a meeting with some of my constituents on Friday, people who are in the vicinity of this area, in Centre Wellington, and people in East Garafraxa township, who are very, very concerned about this proposal and concerned about the health impacts. I think it's fair to say that we don't have a complete and full understanding of what the health impacts might be. Certainly the government seems to be interested in studying that subject. I would suggest that they would be prudent not to proceed with the massive expansion of wind energy without a full and complete understanding of what the potential health impacts might be.

I also received an e-mail from one of my constituents and I'd like to inform the House of it. It's from Janet Vallery, and it reads as follows: "Under the Liberal Green Energy Act the government has eliminated public process to participate in approvals. Companies applying for wind farms only require approval from REA"—renewable energy approval—"at the Ministry of the Environment and Ontario Power Authority. This is not a democratic public process and threatens all rural communities who happen to be located in a wind area. I would go further to say the Liberals have now made Ontario rural families second-class citizens with no property rights."

She goes on to say that the people in the area are meeting with local politicians, who are currently moving forward: “We’ve requested Centre Wellington and Wellington county council [to] sign the moratorium against wind farm development.”

I want to encourage the members of the Legislature to think about those issues and respond accordingly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Mr. Rick Johnson: It’s a pleasure to rise this morning and make some comments here. The member from Trinity–Spadina spoke eloquently about it, as well as the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, and of course my friend from Durham.

The intent of this bill, as we all know, is to protect consumers from unfair practices of gas marketers and energy retailers. My office has received a number of contacts from consumers and residents in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock who have signed contracts and basically been taken advantage of.

I think we are trying to strike a fair balance between protecting consumers’ rights and allowing businesses the opportunity to provide consumers with energy options. If passed, this legislation will empower our consumers. We look forward to further consultations with our residents on this. It’s taken a bold step for our government to step up to the plate on this issue and make sure that the issues are properly addressed. It’s all about protecting the consumer when they come to the door.

Regarding the smart meters, when it comes in for apartment buildings and everyone, it’s really going to allow us to look at where we use our energy, how we use our energy, and to use it smartly. I’m hopeful, in my house, that, first off, the kids will shower at a different time of the day, which will cut down on the use of the water tank and the energy used. I think it will lead to conservation, and anything we can do to help preserve our electrical use and energy consumption will be a good thing.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O’Toole: I want to thank the members who responded, from Trinity–Spadina, Oakville, Wellington–Halton Hills and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. And, yes, I think we’re all onside on this.

I want to put on the record here an e-mail, which I think is in the public domain, from two of my constituents, Peter and Christine Box:

“As an apartment dweller in your constituency I am interested in the above subject inasmuch as how it will affect me financially once the proposed legislation is implemented.

“The legislation seems to concentrate more on the time of use rather than the efficiency of use and when you are in an apartment with no dishwasher and no washer/dryer I can’t see where timing can have any great effect.

“Most of the use of hydro in an apartment is determined by the landlord inasmuch as he supplies the stove/fridge/water heater and at the lowest cost/least efficient.

“He also controls the efficiency of the windows, doors and insulation. Where is the benefit to the tenant....

“I see in one of the government sites there is a list of foreseeable problems and possible solutions.

“One of them addresses some of these problems and the solution suggested is to make landlords comply with certain standards on windows and suites....

“(1) What are ‘certain standards’?

“(2) If the landlord is made to comply and spend money upgrading can they not then turn around and complain they have been forced to spend money,” which will affect my rent itself? My rent will be increased.

“I trust you will look into this and provide”—I have written to Mr. Duguid, the minister on this, and I think it’s worthy to look at income consistency. If you look at the implementation of the HST, it’s another 8% on essential consumption. In British Columbia, which is also implementing the HST, they’re not applying the HST on gasoline. I’m encouraging the ministry to look at people with fragile incomes in this fragile economy. We each have a social and a collective responsibility to be making sure we’re not leaving people behind in this very tough economy.

We’ll be supporting the bill, but let’s not assume that smart meters are smart; they’re time-of-use meters.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I’m happy to speak to Bill 235, and I want to say it is timely. It’s about time. After seven years of complaints that we have all heard in our ridings about energy retailers who often come around to your door with misleading information that entraps people into contracts they simply, in the end, cannot afford, I say, it’s time.

Every MPP in this Legislature comes with a story, a horror story, including the Minister of Energy, where he reads a case that has happened to him. It’s instructive how it can happen to anyone. Errors can happen to anyone and misleading information can be given to anybody. People can buy into contracts that are not right. It happens to many people, but particularly to the most vulnerable in Ontario.

Seniors are particularly fragile and can be easily tempted into buying into a contract that they think is going to save them a few dollars. People who don’t understand the language can be easily taken in by misleading information from energy salespeople who come to your door, telling you you’re going to save money, and in the end, you don’t.

The stories are many. We’ve had this ever since the market was deregulated many, many years ago by the Conservative government. So this is timely because, if nothing else, it’s going to help some people for sure.

But I’ve got to tell you, there are many people in Ontario like myself who long for the good old days of

Consumers' Gas. Many, many people in my riding and others who I know long for the good old days of Consumers' Gas, when they could call just one number and get the service that they desperately needed. They would come and the repairs would happen. The reliability of service was there; the charges were predictable, affordable and reasonable. That ended many, many years ago when my friends to the right of my right decided that deregulation was the way to go and they had to emulate Alberta, their close cousins politically, who had deregulated the market. They too felt that the time was right to put hydro on the spot market, which we have been suffering through for many, many years. I'm telling you, there are a whole lot of people who are looking forward to the day when government will have the power, the fortitude to come back and say, "We're going to re-regulate the market and bring back the good old days of Consumers' Gas."

0950

While some of these measures seem to be helpful and seem to be going in the right direction, nothing short of re-regulation could solve the problem—nothing short. I am one of those old soldiers that wishes that we could go back to those good old days. If truth be told, I'm sure there are many Liberal MPPs who would probably say the same thing but dare not because they can't, including many of the Conservative Party who probably feel the same way but cannot because, ideologically, to do so would be to go against the current leader and the former leader of the Conservative Party.

But we don't have that luxury. We don't have the freedom or the pleasure to be able to say, "We're going to go in this direction. Let's push in that direction." Unfortunately, what we're stuck with is a government who says, "We're going to take some corrective actions to help the consumer because we've been hearing from them for the last 10 years and we've got to do something." So it's better than nothing.

They are going to bring in some protections. For those who feel pressured into signing a contract, the bill proposes three alternatives: a 10-day cooling-off period; upon third party verification within 10 to 60 days of signing the contract; and 30 days after the receipt of the first bill. This is better than what we had before. It's very useful to bring in something that is a little more effective than what we have.

Whether that will solve the problem for those who have literacy issues in the home, for those who don't realize that the new law is there, that they have different measures to grab at as a way of helping them, and whether it will help the majority of citizens who will not have a clue about the changes of the law, I don't know. It will help middle-class professionals who have access to the Web, who are able to use Google and get this information within minutes. It will help those who have the literacy to be able to get that information. This is true, and that is good. But I still maintain that the majority of people will not have a clue about the changes to the law that are being proposed, that are likely to pass, and will continue to suffer the problems that they will face at the door.

They will add additional licensing conditions for retailers—will that help? I don't know—including individual salesperson training and background checks. Okay, they're going to have a background check. I'm not sure what that will determine, what the particular elements of that will be, how it will be able to spot a miscreant, a bad salesperson who they're going to be able to figure out by their training shouldn't be there. I don't know how they're going to be able to do that, but that's what they propose.

An insurance fund to assist in covering potential losses for consumers—very useful.

The Ontario Energy Board will randomly audit retailers—better than nothing. It's better than not to audit retailers at all. Anything is better than what we had, so even a random audit is something more than what we will have had in the past.

Improved officer and director accountability: That's to be determined by regulation. We don't know what that means.

Unfair cancellation policies and fees, automatic renewals for gas contracts: The government proposes that it will prevent excessive cancellation fees or, in some instances, any fees such as when people move or accidentally sign a second contract, and they will eliminate negative option renewals. That is good. But much of what they say by way of what they're proposing is going to be in regulation, and we'll have to see what they propose in regulation to determine whether or not what they recommend is, indeed, going to be effective.

So on the whole issue of marketers, any effort to stop misleading sales of energy contracts at the door, in my view, is going to be a positive step in the right direction. But I look forward to deputations coming to committee; I really do. I'm looking forward to the Advocacy Centre for Tenants and other groups, such as the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. There are many different groups that will be representing tenants, which I think will bring to the table a lot of concerns that the government may not have yet heard, and if they haven't heard them, hopefully they will have their ears open to the suggestions as a way of improving this.

There are questions of submetering that we have. I believe that the Advocacy Centre for Tenants and the other group that I mentioned, the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, have raised concerns. I want to raise a couple, and they relate to submetering.

The sub-metering protections only happen to sitting tenants. Those who are willing to have them, presumably they understand what they're getting into and presumably it's something they want. But because of vacancy decontrol, it means that the people who are coming into the apartment have no control whatsoever about what they're getting into. In fact, vacancy decontrol often means that if that person was paying that much rent, as soon as you leave, when the new person comes in, the landlord can charge what they want. That's what vacancy decontrol is all about, and it's going to hurt them. It has been hurting a lot of tenants ever since the law was changed by the

Tories and continued by the Liberals. As it relates to the protections, the new people coming in will not have any say whatsoever. That's something that I suspect people that are coming to depute will speak to. I think that is a concern. How the government intends to deal with that is beyond me. My suspicion is that they don't intend to deal with it, but we'll wait and see.

Landlords' obligations concerning necessary retrofits are not clear at the present. Those obligations would likely only extend to current sitting tenants. This means that tenants will potentially face higher fees due to factors entirely within the landlords' control, which in turn will affect the tenants' ability to pay.

There are other concerns that tenants have. Tenants still pay for common-area energy use in their rent. They have no control over reduction of energy use in common areas. I don't believe that the government has thought about the implications of that. How are they dealing with common areas? Common areas are beyond the control of individual tenants but they're still going to be paying. This particular bill does not deal with common areas and does not deal with the effects this will have on tenants and their ability to pay.

Load-shifting, something that the member from Durham was talking about, typically involves using appliances such as dishwashers, washers and dryers during mid- or off-peak pricing periods. The problem is that most tenants do not have these appliances in their suites, and so they have absolutely no control.

It's instructive, because the member from Durham was reading a letter in his last two minutes in which a tenant was talking about how many of the things that affect the hydro prices are not within their control. The lady or the man that sent that letter was talking about, "We don't control the quality of the windows. We don't control the quality of the doors. We don't control insulation—no insulation or bad insulation. We don't control, indeed, the appliances" that I just mentioned.

So this will affect tenants in a serious way. And while the government says that the landlords are required to meet certain energy efficiency standards for appliances in suites, we don't know what that means because that has yet to be determined by regulation. Unless we have a sense of what that is going to be, we don't know how tenants are going to be affected.

1000

The most dramatic thing for me, which I think the member from Durham was getting at as well, is that over 30% of Ontario tenant households live at or below the poverty line, so any increase in shelter costs, including those costs associated with utilities, has a disproportionate impact on these low-income households. This is a serious matter.

Homeowners earn, I believe, twice the amount of money than those who live in private rental housing. The majority of people barely make ends meet. Some struggle. So when the government says, "We're going to introduce a harmonized sales tax," that harmonized sales tax is going to add an extra \$225 a year for tenants. It may

not sound like much to those who earn over \$100,000, but tenants who live in private rental households, who only earn \$30,000, \$35,000, \$40,000, are going to be seriously affected by that extra \$225 they're going to have to pay because of the introduction of the harmonized sales tax.

We raised that question yesterday. We went through the freedom-of-information request to try to ask how much it's going to cost people for the additional 8% retail sales tax on utilities. It took eight long months to get that information—eight long months, as if somehow there was a great deal of secrecy attached to it. The government did its very best to delay and obstruct the opposition parties from getting that information. Eight long months—I don't get it.

If you're proud of your harmonized tax, just go out and defend it. Continue to defend it. Be aggressive about it. If the members of the opposition want the information, why take so long to give it to them? There is no overriding privacy interest. If you're proud of your harmonized sales tax, be aggressive, go out and defend everything. Don't obstruct the opposition parties as you've been doing for years and months when they are requesting to get that information.

We also made a request to find out how much it will cost drivers, with the additional harmonized sales tax, for gasoline. We can't get that information. For some reason, with this particular government there's a great deal of privacy. Why so much privacy on the issue? I just don't get it. This additional cost is going to hurt.

We talked about two major issues that I am convinced are going to make for instructive deputations. One is whether or not we're cracking down sufficiently on energy retailers, and whether or not the government is interested in re-regulating the market. It is my profound hope that deputations that will come forward are going to be calling for bringing back Consumers' Gas, having one regulator of the market, one provider of hydro as opposed to the many different providers of a deregulated market that the Conservatives brought in many years ago. That will be one question.

The other question is, what kinds of regulations are we likely to see this government introduce that are going to bring the protections that the Ontario Energy Board said we need to bring in to protect tenants, particularly those who are most vulnerable; and, third, the issues of sub-metering and how that will affect many of the tenants who live in private rental households, and how that will affect particularly those who are most vulnerable.

I look forward to the hearings. I look forward to the member from Brant being sincere, as he said he will be, in his comments about how responsive he will be to the deputants. Hopefully, he will be true to his word because I suspect a lot of advocacy groups are going to come forward, stating a lot of concerns that they will have, and if they haven't yet heard them, that they will consider them at the time of the hearings.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: The member from Trinity–Spadina has left me with a small challenge, and I’ll take that challenge up: to confirm one more time that indeed, as his concerns have been laid out, I’ve made that commitment to him and to the House. I’ve made that commitment in the past and I believe I have a record that fulfills that whenever I was a parliamentary assistant. I believe I have a spotless record when it comes to amendments. We did find some amendments and we did work with the opposition when I was the parliamentary assistant previous. We did find ways to make the bill better, and that would be my intent. So I recommit myself for a third time to the minister—to the member from Trinity–Spadina—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I don’t mind being a minister.

Mr. Dave Levac: You don’t want to be a minister.

But let me comment quickly on the aspect of the bill that the member talks about. He does speak about specifics that can be done inside, and will be done with other aspects of other ministries, actually, regarding the building code and upkeep of the tenants’ facilities. There are opportunities for us to use federal and provincial programs that are already in existence to upgrade an awful lot of the areas of apartment buildings and single-family dwellings to do that.

We are in a culture of conservation regarding energy. We are learning how to conserve energy and we are starting programs and have programs that are always in existence, that continue to get us to a better place when it comes to using energy. I don’t think there’s anyone in the House that will not agree that Canada, just as much as Ontario, has been well known for not being very good at conserving energy. We are getting much better but we’ve got a long way to go. So this is one of those areas in which I believe we are finding commonality.

The last comment to you is that this is a consumer protection bill, that’s what we’re trying to accomplish, and I’m sure that we’re going to be able to reach that.

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

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s always interesting and challenging to reply to the minister—or the member, rather, from Trinity–Spadina—

Mr. Dave Levac: We all want him to be a minister.

Mr. John O’Toole: —who used to be a minister and now doesn’t want to be a minister; there’s too much responsibility that goes with it. Because when he was in government, that’s when they implemented the social contract, something they didn’t want to do but had to do. I always admire the eloquence of his remarks.

But we are on the record of being in support of this Bill 235 with respect to the provisions of the retailers coming and knocking on your door, wanting to see your bill and charge you more. What we have concerns with—and I raised it on behalf of my constituent and the member from Trinity–Spadina referenced it, and I’d be happy to share this e-mail with him from my constituent who is concerned about the sub-metering provisions in this Bill 235—and that’s to deal with the smart meters.

Again, I want to repeat they are not smart meters, they are time-of-use meters and they allow the utility to bill you three different rates: on-peak, off-peak and high-peak. These rates, if you pay about five cents a kilowatt hour now, at the top of peak you’re going to pay almost 10 cents. The energy costs are going to double. The question was raised yesterday by your leader, Andrea Horwath, about the implications of the HST on electricity. It’s going to cost \$225 a year, per person, more in HST for natural gas and electricity. When you look at this thing and you factor in the smart meter and the time-of-use provisions under the regulations, I put to you and to Mr. Levac from Brant, who is an excellent member, that to the people on fixed incomes who often live in apartments or in less—

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

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Trinity–Spadina for roughly 18 minutes. He spoke about many different elements about energy consumption in the province of Ontario and raised many different concerns, and rightly so, I guess, as he’s in the position to raise questions. I think we as a government—I listened to the PA for the minister, the member from Brant, speak about the process.

You know, all the bills, all recommendations proposed in this place take a chance and go to committee, and those committees travel the province of Ontario. We listen to many stakeholders, consumers and many people to give us advice and raise their concerns in order to enhance the bill and make it a good bill.

1010

The most important thing in this bill talks about consumer protections, because all of us from across the province of Ontario heard about the stories. Every riding, every constituency office, received many different complaints from constituents about people knocking on their door, signing a contract, and they cannot get out of this contract. So many different parts and elements of this contract are hidden and they don’t understand. They’re stuck with the contract, and in the end, if they want to get out of it, they pay a high price.

That’s why this bill came, to protect those consumers across the province of Ontario: to make the act and make those contracts very simple, using simple language so that people can understand it, and also get the chance, if they don’t understand it the first time, to get out of the contract within 10 to 60 days or 30 days after paying the first bill.

It’s very important to focus on the issues which this bill is trying to do in the province to create some kind of protection mechanism for the people across the province of Ontario who were victims in the past of many different people knocking on their doors and forcing them to sign a contract they don’t want.

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

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I was listening to the member for Trinity–Spadina. I’m sure he’s well aware that

this bill is for the protection of our consumers. At the present time, we know all those retailers that are knocking on doors are not really telling the truth to the consumers. I had, just this morning here, because people must be watching the debate, this lady Nathalie who is writing me, sending me a note saying that I have to call her back. She signed a contract at 7.99 cents. She did the calculation. It comes up to over 11 cents a kilowatt hour. This is the approach they are using. They are trying to convince people that they will be paying less money when they sign a contract. That is completely, completely false. Every one of them—I get at least one call a day from people who have signed contracts, and I'm able to work with most of them to get them cancelled because they are not telling the truth to the people. Very often they sign the contract for them, so they're forging the signature. Myself, they told me that I had signed for my company. I immediately called a lawyer. The lawyer told me, "You've got to see the police." I got the OPP to investigate that. We had 23 of those in my area that forged the signature.

I'd just like to go back to what my friend from Durham was saying. It's true: We have a debt of over around \$17 billion at the present time. But let me tell you, why do we have that debt? At one time, December 2002, we were paying \$1.33 per kilowatt hour and the government was charging the people 4.3 cents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Trinity–Spadina has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to thank the members from Brant and Durham for referring to me as a minister. I'm looking forward to that, actually, in the next election. It would be something that I could handle. Twenty years later it would be a lot easier than it was.

Second point: The members from London–Fanshawe and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell make a strong case for re-regulating the market. I agree. I think you probably liked the system as we had it when you were in government many, many years ago and when we were in government in 1990. We had one provider of the service, Consumers' Gas. I think that is the argument I made earlier and that I believe you're trying to make as well: The abuses have happened so frequently against consumers for so long that something has to be done. Whether or not the suggestions you are making in this bill are adequate to curb the abuses by retailers remains to be seen, but that action has to be taken is a must, and I agree with that.

That's why I put to you, are you interested in re-regulating the market? Because that would be the ultimate way of solving it; that's what I put to you. But I'm not sure I heard any of the Liberal members speak to that particular issue at all. You stand up and say, "We need to help the consumers"—and I agree with that, of course, but I put the ultimate test to you: What about re-regulation?

By the way, member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, the debt that we have on energy has to do with nu-

clear. You'll remember Darlington: It cost us \$15 billion or \$16 billion. We're still paying for that today. That's why we have that debt, not because of any other reason.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, it's true. I wanted to remind you of that.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): This House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Our family are avid campers, and we've gone from tents to a fifth wheel that the kids call the travelling cottage. So I'm really pleased to welcome to the Legislature today Camping in Ontario and the Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association, who are in our east gallery.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce some guests in the west gallery who have come a long way to see us today: Denis Bideri from the World Vision Rwanda program; Didan Rwabika, youth ambassador from Rwanda; Rachel Makege, the youth ambassador from Tanzania; Max Seunik, Canadian youth ambassador; and the chaperones Henry Vanderspek, Alex Sancton and Ellen Kuschnik from my constituency office.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to introduce my guests in the west members' gallery: Paul Bradbury, Rosalind Cameron, Moe Horenfeldt and Marlene Horenfeldt, all from the region of York.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to welcome in our members' gallery Rudy and Marie Cuzzeto and their children Michael and Joey. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Joining us shortly in the gallery will be the grades 4 and 5 classes from St. Paul school in my constituency.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure to introduce Councillor John Phair from the town of Petrolia, joining us in the members' gallery today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce Emily Reid—she may already have been introduced—from Camping in Ontario; as well as Roland Goreski, who's the general manager of Campkin's from my riding, involved in that industry. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to introduce to you a delegation from the People's Republic of China, specifically from Anqing province. They're being led by Mr. Fang Zuzhong, vice-chairman of the standing committee of the Anqing local people's congress. They're being joined by a committee of the National Congress of Chinese Canadians and Mr. Shu King Kong.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Scarborough Centre and page Julia Louis, to welcome her father, Hani Louis, to Queen's Park today.

As well, on behalf of the member from Barrie and page Christopher Parker, I'd like to welcome mother

Michelle Parker and father Al Parker to Queen's Park today. Welcome, all.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Acting Premier. How many manufacturing jobs in Ontario have been lost since you took office?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Regrettably, in the last year, there have been some 252,000 job losses in the manufacturing sector, which is far too many. There have been job losses in Michigan, Ohio and across most manufacturing jurisdictions. That is precisely why, working with the federal government, we have put together a comprehensive tax package that will create, according to the Conservative Party's expert witness, some 600,000 net new jobs over the next 10 years.

Jobs and employment continue to be a major issue. Your party and your leader have said nothing about how to deal with this world crisis. We have laid out a plan. We will build on that plan as we move forward. We have taken the tough choices that will get this economy and get those unemployed people back to work in meaningful, good-paying jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: You can project any number of jobs that you want in a perfect world at some point in time, but let's look at the facts.

According to Statistics Canada, Dalton McGuinty has lost almost 280,000 well-paid, full-time manufacturing jobs since taking office. How many of those jobs did Dalton McGuinty lose before the recession even began?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What Statistics Canada said is that the Canadian manufacturing sector, like the world sector, has had a massive restructuring and seen job loss across the western world. So I would caution the member about interpreting what Stats Canada says. What Stats Canada has also said is that since June of last year, we've seen a net increase in manufacturing jobs.

That being said, we have lost far too many jobs. Far too many families in this province are struggling not only with job loss but job uncertainty. That's why we've laid out a plan to create jobs. That's why we've said what we need to do. That party and her leader have no answer, except to go back to a long past era that this province rejected in 2003. Give us a plan, give us an alternative, and lay off—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Obscured in all of this rhetoric, what this government does not want to talk about is the fact that 206,000 full-time manufacturing jobs were lost in Ontario under this government before the recession even began. When Dalton McGuinty is reminded of

the facts, he calls it "fun with numbers." There's nothing fun about 206,000 Ontario families without a paycheque.

Here's another important fact: Between 1995 and 2003, Ontario PC governments created over 200,000 manufacturing jobs. Then Dalton McGuinty came along and cancelled the tax cuts, implemented a health tax, raised corporate taxes, is raising sales tax, increased red tape and implemented a crippling energy policy.

Why did Dalton McGuinty abandon Ontario families who make their living in the manufacturing sector?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I know a lot of people who've lost their jobs in my riding, and I think they see through the shallowness of that rhetoric. They recognize that the world economy took an enormous downturn in 2008. They recognize that it happened in Michigan and Ohio.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: And they can yell and shout—but we have acknowledged that. We have said that that crisis is an enormous challenge for our families and those families who have lost jobs or seen their jobs threatened. But we have taken the right steps to create jobs. That has been endorsed even by their own expert witness. And, I might point out to the members opposite, working with the federal government, working with the people in Ottawa who get it around tax reform and the need for job creation, we have taken the right steps—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again to the Acting Premier, a simple question: How many long-term-care beds have you created since you took office?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think by any measure we have really invested in long-term care in this province. We're really committed to providing high-quality care for those who need long-term care.

One of the real successes of our government, I think, is the quality of care. The Ontario Health Quality Council will measure and publicly report health outcomes and satisfaction for the first time starting this fall.

We're working with partners in the sector to implement the recommendations in the Sharkey report to improve the quality of care. We're rebuilding 35,000 beds over the next 10 years. We've begun that process now. That's more than half the homes in this province.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I didn't hear a number there. I'll take it that the answer is none.

Between 1995 and 2003—again, let's look at the facts—Ontario PC governments created—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Please continue.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Between 1995 and 2003, Ontario PC governments created 20,000 new long-term-care

beds and refurbished 16,000 more. We prepared for this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The clock is stopped.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ministers of Education and Economic Development and Community Safety.

Please continue.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We created spaces across the province, and the McGuinty Liberals have closed emergency rooms, long-term-care beds and clinics in the Ottawa area, like Bruyère Continuing Care, Ottawa Hospital and Cornwall Community Hospital. You've also made cuts to Douglas Memorial in Fort Erie and the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre.

You're spending a record amount of money. Why are you incapable of creating new long-term-care beds?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that the question demonstrates how terribly out of touch members of the opposition party are.

I'm very, very happy to tell you that we've opened almost 8,000 new long-term-care beds, and I want to remind the member opposite that our 2009 budget commits to adding another 2,000 beds in 10 communities across this province by 2010.

In my home community of London, we're adding 600 new beds. I'm not talking about redeveloped beds; I'm talking about new beds. In Thunder Bay, 132 new supportive units. Across this province, people are benefiting from the increase in the number of long-term-care beds. We are also expanding the continuum of supports available so that people can stay in their homes longer.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: If you give a Conservative \$1 billion, you get 20,000 new long-term-care beds. If you give a Liberal \$1 billion, you get eHealth. And who knows how much more the 14 LHINs are wasting on sweetheart deals with the same Liberal-friendly consultants from the eHealth boondoggle. You boast you'll be spending—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The noise is coming from both sides of the House, honourable member from Renfrew.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Especially from—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She's been told so many times.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I don't need the help from the member from Renfrew.

I've tried very hard not to be warning members and turfing members out, but if we're going to persist, I'm going to have to get to that point.

Please continue.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: This government's boasting that they'll spend \$42 billion this year on health care, but what difference does it make when most of the money ends up lining the pockets of your consultant friends rather than on direct, front-line patient care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I just am astounded by the question. I will line up our record on health care against their record on health care any day of the week.

When we were elected in 2003, we were on the brink of moving into a two-tier health care system because the system was simply not being supported.

Almost 900,000 more people have access to primary health care than they did when we took office. By 2013, we will have doubled the number of new doctors graduating each year. We will have doubled the number of new doctors practising in this province than there were just six years ago.

Family health teams are a huge success for us. The New England Journal of Medicine has praised—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. We learned yesterday that Ontarians will pay an extra \$225 each year to heat their homes and keep their lights on, thanks to this government's HST scheme. Also yesterday, consumers were warned that they should expect gas prices to rise to \$1.12 a litre, and that's without the extra 8% HST. Can the Acting Premier tell us: How much more will the average family pay at the pumps as of July 1st?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: No, I can't. I'll give you a "for instance." When I filled up my tank two weeks ago, I paid 95 cents, and seven days later I paid 85 cents. It's varying up to 10 to 12 cents. I don't know the last time she went to a gas station, but I go to them at least once a week, and they are varying like that.

What I can tell her is that the tax package we put forward provides sales tax credits and personal tax cuts which will more than offset any additional expenditures that at least 93% of people have with respect to the implementation of our package, which will create 600,000 jobs. I would invite her to take the advice of Hugh Mackenzie and of the institute for policy alternatives: "Do the right thing—create jobs and lower taxes for Ontario's most vulnerable citizens." That's why your own supporters don't back you up.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All I'd advise this minister to do is to actually listen to the people of this province. That's the advice that this government needs. We know very well that this government has the information. But

they've repeatedly rejected our freedom-of-information request asking for it. People have a right to know exactly how much extra they're going to be paying at the pumps. StatsCan reports that Ontario families already pay, on average, \$2,310 a year for gas. Simple math suggests that the HST will tack on an extra \$185 each and every year. Will the Acting Premier confirm this for us? Does the HST mean \$185 extra every year to fill up at the pumps?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No; absolutely not. What the member is doing is trying to take one part of the story. I would refer her to page 25 of Ontario's Tax Plan for Jobs and Growth, where it gives a very specific breakdown about how people of different incomes and different family situations will in fact benefit overall from our tax package.

We did consult Ontarians. We consulted anti-poverty groups. We consulted Hugh Mackenzie and other prominent New Democrats, who have all embraced the notion of lowering taxes to create jobs and, particularly, to lower taxes for Ontario's most vulnerable citizens through the Ontario child benefit, which she voted against, through the cuts to the lowest bracket of income.

This is about creating jobs. We have a plan. Every expert agrees it will create jobs. All they want to do is trade in tired rhetoric. We want to create jobs, and we will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: All the people of this province tell me they want and all New Democrats want is for this government to come clean. That's all we want. Yesterday the Minister of Revenue acknowledged that he has a breakdown of the government's revenues from the new tax on gas, on home heating and on everything else. But they've blocked our request seeking that very information. If the government is so confident that their HST scheme is a good one, then why are they hiding the information and refusing to tell Ontarians exactly how much they're going to be hosed at the pumps?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's in the budget. We laid out how much revenue the HST will collect. What the member forgets—and this is why, I think, many Ontarians are coming to be very skeptical and why Ontarians recognize how difficult this is. She doesn't talk about the sales tax credit; she doesn't talk about the personal income tax.

We put together a package—it's outlined in the budget—with three-year projections going forward. We updated that in the fall statement and we will update it again in the budget. It's all there for people to see and to make judgment on.

We are confident that a government that addresses the jobs challenge and the unemployed in northern Ontario, Windsor and across Ontario will see job growth, an improved economy and a better Ontario in the future because of the decisions we've taken today that address the employment challenges that she and her party refuse to address.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier. On Monday, in response to a question on the Buy America trade deal, the Acting Premier quoted the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, but their reaction to the deal can be characterized as lukewarm at best. In fact, the CME is calling for continued discussions. Others just call it a bad deal.

Ontario has been asked to ratify this deal. Will this happen behind closed doors, or will the McGuinty government agree to public hearings so Ontarians know exactly what their government is getting them into this time?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm very happy to speak about Buy America because this is a great-news story for Ontario and people who work in this province.

For many months we were very worried when the US started down this path of Buy America. Ontario was the lead in asking the federal government to do something about stopping this Buy America clause, so you can imagine that we were delighted, along with our partners—yes, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters being one of them—to ask, how can we work with our American counterparts to get rid of that clause?

I'm pleased to say that we had unprecedented support from coast to coast to work with our national colleagues to bring forward a solution which removes the Buy America package not just from the current economic stimulus package, but as well from future purchases at the state and federal level in the United States of America.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This deal has some serious implications for the province and for municipal governments, in terms of their ability to use public money to support Ontario jobs.

Critics of the deal say Canada gave American companies access to \$25 billion worth of Canadian contracts in exchange for Canadian suppliers getting a mere \$4 billion worth of American contracts. It's like selling the farm to buy a tractor.

Given the apparent imbalance, why isn't this government allowing the Legislature and the public to debate this deal?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think there are two key numbers to keep in mind: one is 10, and the other is 65. The \$10 billion represents what we across Canada, provincially, are prepared to offer in government procurement to our American colleague companies. The other number is 65, which is the access that our companies will have to \$65 billion worth of annual procurement from state levels in the US, and that's what's so important. Yes, what we are offering up is unprecedented; we hadn't done that before in government procurement at the state and, for a temporary period, municipal level.

What we get on an ongoing and annual basis is \$65 billion of access to government procurement. This is a

win for Ontario companies and it is a win for workers. That's why the CAW came into my office to get a personal briefing on the buy-America package, an offer that we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here are some of the possible impacts of the buy-America deal: It might prevent cities and towns from buying food from local farms and vehicles from local manufacturers, and it might restrict the province from sourcing medical equipment from Ontario's suppliers. In other words, it may take job-creating tools away from local governments in exchange for not very much at all.

If the McGuinty government is so sure that this is the right deal for Ontario, then why will they not, at the very least, agree to a full public debate?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I know you seem worried about the municipal reaction. The president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities says, "Canadians are fighting hard to recover from the recession.... Today's announcement gives them hope." In North Bay, they called the agreement "a spectacularly huge win."

Moreover, I would encourage the NDP to take us up on the offer to come in for a full briefing so we could give you the kind of detail so you too could be proud of the fact that workers want to work and that our companies here in Ontario want access to those contracts so that Ontario workers will work. I thought that's what the NDP wanted as well, but apparently we've been mistaken again.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the environment minister: Are you firing Ontario's Environmental Commissioner because he revealed Dalton McGuinty's climate change targets are nothing but hot air?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, you know, I can't believe this question. It's nice to get an environment question, by the way, because usually that party isn't interested in the environment at all.

First of all, Mr. Miller has done an outstanding job over the last 10 years, there's no question about it, and we appreciate his advice on an ongoing basis. But I think it's also fair to say that we want to have a transparent and open process. We all know that these appointments are for five years. We certainly ask anyone who may be interested in the job, including Mr. Miller, to go through the transparent process. Let's take a look at who's out there and interested in the job. Let's get the best-qualified person, who may very well be Mr. Miller. He has done an outstanding job and I'm sure that he will continue to contribute to the province of Ontario in the years ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, that's all well and good, but in his latest report the Environmental Commissioner exposed Dalton McGuinty's dirty secret: Greenhouse gas emissions have gone up and will keep going up under the

McGuinty Liberals. The commissioner says, "The fact that greenhouse gas emissions are projected to rise between 2014 and 2020 points to a serious deficiency in the government's planning."

Interjection: Shame.

Mr. Toby Barrett: That is shameful.

While your climate change guru, your Liberal friend Hugh MacLeod, was allowed to make a quiet exit, the commissioner joins the Ombudsman in being hung out to dry. Why does Dalton McGuinty dump everyone who criticizes him or holds him accountable?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, it is fascinating getting these kinds of questions from this member. If you're so much interested in climate change, why did you vote against the coal-fired energy plant closures? Why did every member in your caucus vote against the greenbelt? And I can think of so many other good, positive environmental initiatives that this government has brought along over the last six years.

We look forward to working with that member and his caucus to deal with the real environmental issues, which include climate change, and we look forward to working with Mr. Miller in whatever capacity he chooses and we choose as a result of the transparent process that we're involved in. But it's great to see you're finally interested in the environment, because that's quite a change from the usual attitude of the Conservative Party.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Your government has hired two controversy-ridden banks to advise on privatizing Ontario's assets. The first is Goldman Sachs, which admitted complicity in the great financial crisis and is currently embroiled in the Greek government's debt scandal; the second, CIBC, which just last month paid \$27 million to the Ontario Securities Commission for its role in the sale of sub-prime securities and which is deeply involved with the rail privatization scandal in BC. So we don't take your word for things being upfront when it comes to these kinds of deals.

Will the government table the tender documents for the services of these companies? And if not, why not?

1100

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government routinely employs the service of outside advisers who do these on a competitive basis on a variety of issues.

I should point out to the member that we are looking at our assets with respect to the proper management of those assets, going forward. This is something that governments routinely do. It is appropriate in the context of how capital is invested, how we're maximizing the return on those assets.

We look forward to continuing to do the kinds of research and background that will help the Legislature—and I say "the Legislature"—make more informed decisions as we move forward into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The minister and his boss consistently refuse to put on the table the documents that show whether or not Ontario is protected in its dealings with these controversy-ridden firms. Will this minister put on the table the contract with these two companies? If not, why not?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government will continue to follow the procurement directives that have been agreed to and voted on by this Legislature. We will fulfill our obligations to that.

This is a government that has in fact done things like bringing Hydro One and OPG under freedom of information and has made a variety of other changes on our procurement practices that are designed to provide greater transparency and accountability.

It is important that from time to time in a competitive process, the government of Ontario look at assets and a variety of issues to ensure that we are in fact maximizing the support and the assets that we have in our quiver.

It's important that we continue to do that kind of due diligence in terms of assuring the taxpayers that the considerable sums of money they have invested in those assets are well invested.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Glen R. Murray: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, during question period the member for Parkdale–High Park made reference to an individual who wrote to your ministry, raising safety concerns about a workplace. The member claimed that the individual has yet to receive a response from your ministry regarding specific safety violations.

Minister, you have often stood up in the House and said that workplace health and safety is your number one priority. Would the minister be able to update the Legislature on this matter?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. First of all, let me applaud the individual who wrote the Ministry of Labour to express his concerns around health and safety at this particular workplace. I appreciate the time that he took to make these concerns known to us. I want to reassure him and the member opposite that my ministry followed up on those concerns.

I've been advised that upon receiving the written letter, a ministry inspector visited the site and ensured compliance with the Occupational Health And Safety Act. The inspector spoke to property management regarding the safety issues raised in that letter. The inspector prepared a written field report and a copy was left with the workplace on November 3. I have also been advised that a letter will be sent to the individual who raised those concerns. Again, I thank him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Minister, for your response. I am glad to hear that you followed up on the issue raised yesterday by my friend from Parkdale–High Park. More importantly, it is good to know that your

ministry staff has responded to the individual's concerns and have had inspectors visit the site.

It is also good that concerned citizens are actively engaged in the safety of Ontario workplaces. We all lead busy lives with various responsibilities. However, Ontarians are known to look out for one another. What else can our citizens be doing to help keep our workers safe?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I thank the member for the question. My ministry has 430 inspectors who are out in the field every single day to ensure that our workplaces are kept safe. This is double the number of inspectors that we had in 2003.

But even with such a large team, our inspectors can't be everywhere at once. That's why I want to encourage all Ontarians to report any unsafe or questionable work-sites to the Ministry of Labour. We have a hotline set up for concerned citizens to call and report any health and safety concerns in Ontario's workplaces. That's 1-800-268-8013. You can also send a letter in to the Ministry of Labour with your concerns.

I can assure you that every issue about an Ontario workplace that is brought to our attention—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Attorney General. Your government counsel in a civil lawsuit settled over Christmas cross-examined an Ontario man about his decision to fly a Canadian flag in his yard. Your civil lawyer asked, and I quote, "Weren't you at all concerned about instigating a confrontation" by flying the flag, and later added, "I take it from your answer that you were not at all concerned about provoking a response."

This wasn't an arm's-length police officer or a prosecutor. This is your civil counsel. His instructions had to come from someone. Who instructed him to take the position that flying the Canadian flag in your own front yard is an act of provocation?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I know we all stand as proud Canadians and proud Ontarians yesterday, today, tomorrow, forever.

I would suggest, respectfully, to the honourable member that he actually go back and take a look at the full court transcript. You know, things taken out of context always have a different flavour than when they are seen in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It really doesn't assist anybody in any way to start picking and poking at a word or two from lengthy court proceedings. We stand as proud Canadians, all of us, in discharging our duties.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Yesterday, when I asked about the right of a citizen to raise a Canadian flag, Minister Bartolucci said the question was inciting inappropriate

behaviour. Only in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is asking a question inciting and the right to fly Canada's flag inappropriate behaviour. The man was in his own yard, flying a Canadian flag.

Liberals used to believe that this was an act of expression protected by section 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We know from the citizenship minister's answer that the McGuinty Liberals' new policy against flying the Canadian flag isn't being applied in Toronto St. Paul's yet. But who else in Ontario should be on notice that flying the flag makes them a provocateur?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Again, we all stand for the principles which our flag represents, and those who represent the laws on which the flag stands stand for those principles as well. Whether they're the police, whether they're the crowns, whether they're the judicial officials, whether they're the lawyers, they all stand to discharge those duties, sometimes in very challenging and difficult circumstances, and sometimes their role is to make sure that they try to keep matters as calm as possible so that we can, as a society, get to a more peaceful, prosperous and fruitful resolution of very difficult and challenging issues.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the transportation minister. There seems to be some confusion over on the government side when it comes to declaring public transit an essential service. Monday morning, the transportation minister said the McGuinty government was opposed, but Monday afternoon, 29 McGuinty government MPPs, including a half dozen cabinet ministers, voted unanimously in favour. Yesterday, the Premier dodged the issue, saying it was up to municipal politicians to decide. My question is, what is the McGuinty government's position on declaring public transit an essential service?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows perfectly well that in private member's business it is the custom of this House to vote in favour as part of the democratic process to get a bill into play.

The Premier and I and our caucus are on exactly the same page. It really is up to the people of Toronto to decide whether they want to request that the provincial government look at the issue of the TTC being declared an essential service. There has been no departure from that position. That is the position that both I and the Premier have expressed.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I thought George Smitherman had left the McGuinty cabinet but it looks as if he's still informing polity.

Rather than abdicating its responsibility for public transit in Toronto and elsewhere, this government should stop playing games and actually do something constructive for public transit. It could start by making a commitment to fund half of all operating costs. Municipal polit-

icians have already called exactly for that. When will the McGuinty government finally deliver?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Since 2003, we have committed almost \$12 billion to transit projects in Toronto. I think by any standard, and particularly the standard set by the member opposite's party, that is a huge commitment to public transit in Toronto. That includes more than \$3.5 billion to the city of Toronto for a number of transit initiatives, including the Spadina subway extension, revitalization of Union Station and money for the replacement of 204 streetcars; in addition, almost \$8 billion committed to Metrolinx for rapid transit projects.

Our commitment to transit across the province, but transit in the city of Toronto, is absolutely unquestionable. Twelve billion dollars is the physical manifestation of that, but I think the other reality is that we have worked in partnership, Metrolinx is working in partnership with the city of Toronto because we understand how important transit is to this city.

TOURISM

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. Tourism generates employment, supports small businesses and stimulates the economy. That's why investing in marketing Ontario and, more specifically, our regions needs more efficiency and coordination. However, there is a concern in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. The implementation of the 13 new tourism regions will have Haliburton county divided into two different tourism regions.

The Haliburton County Echo quotes Sally Moore, who owns Sunny Rock Bed and Breakfast in Minden, as saying, "There is concern for the county being split up after so many years of work to create an identity for the Haliburton Highlands."

What assurances can you make to the tourism operators in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock with regard to their concerns over the implementation of the new tourism regions?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for the question. The tourism industry has become more and more competitive. There is a need to act. This is why my government commissioned the competitiveness study. As a result, we are implementing 13 new tourism regions that will help us better market Ontario.

I would like to assure the honourable member and tourism operators across Ontario that these steps are being taken to better showcase Ontario, to strengthen the industry and stay competitive. We are building on past successes and encouraging further co-operation between regions and tourism organizations. We are confident that these regions will work together to grow tourism in Ontario and take it to the next level.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Tourism is an economic driver for Ontario. The benefits are far-reaching. Tourism strengthens our province and provides the 13 million people who

reside here with a better quality of life. From one end of the province to the other, there really is so much to discover.

We all have a vested interest in attracting more visitors. Increased visitors are a must for Ontario and for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. At the heart of the matter is the future of tourism across the province and in Haliburton. We need to ensure that the implementation of these regions will ensure greater efficiency in marketing and managing tourism while giving Ontario a competitive edge.

Will the implementation of these new regions support the long-term viability of tourism in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member again for the question.

As a result of our government's consultation, as a result of the study, as a result of our investments, there will be long-term viability in our tourism industry.

The study engaged 500 tourism partners. It consisted of 13 public consultations and 200 written submissions. While developing regional boundaries, we had 17 planning sessions and yet another 40 written submissions. We are also investing a total of \$65 million a year for two years in support of the tourism industry.

The honourable member is correct: Tourism is an economic driver for Ontario, and we are going to keep it that way.

RECREATIONAL VEHICLES

Mr. Frank Klees: With us today at Queen's Park are members of the Ontario Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association and Camping Ontario—and I'm pleased to hear the minister's support for tourism. My question is to the Minister of Transportation, because they're here with a very specific and very practical request, and that is a request that has now been ongoing for some five years to the Ministry of Transportation. It simply takes a small regulatory change.

In the province of Ontario, unlike other provinces throughout this country, someone wanting to drive a recreational vehicle is required to have a class A licence. That is essentially a commercial truck driver's licence. In other provinces, it's simply the equivalent of a class G licence.

My question is this: Will the minister agree to meet with representatives today for but a few minutes to hear their—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to welcome, wherever they are, their representatives to the House—thank you very much for being here—and I want to thank the member for the question.

I did have the opportunity, at the Ontario Good Roads Association conference yesterday, to meet with some folks who had some concerns about snowmobiles and the operation of snowmobiles. I think you're talking about a different issue, but I just want you to know that I am

interested in these issues. I don't have the answer for you in terms of the logistics or the actual regulation that you're speaking of.

I'd be happy to talk to the folks. Whether I can do it today or not—I'll certainly touch base with them. I'd certainly be happy to hear the details of the issue and to explore it with you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: It is a very straightforward issue. The ministry, for the last number of years, has had representation—and I appreciate the fact that the minister is agreeing to meet with these people. They are here today. The minister surely can find 10 minutes in her schedule today, even if it's immediately following question period. I would just ask her to take the opportunity to hear from them on this straightforward issue. Will she agree to meet with these people immediately following question period?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd be happy—and the member will introduce me—to have a conversation with them. I do have to ask—because this member was the Minister of Transportation—if this was such a simple issue, why it didn't get changed when he was the Minister of Transportation. Methinks there might be a layer of complexity that I haven't heard about. But I would be happy to hear from the members who are here.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. On Monday, I met with a group of mayors from the Northern Ontario Municipal Association, and they expressed real concern about Queen's Park ignoring northerners. High unemployment is wreaking havoc on their families and communities. In Thunder Bay, for example, food bank use has soared by 40%. People are leaving the north in droves to find jobs. Why is northern Ontario being abandoned by their government?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I had the opportunity a couple of weeks ago to travel through northeastern and northwestern Ontario and to meet with a variety of mayors, and there is no doubt that the north is experiencing challenges, particularly unemployment, and a range of very difficult issues. We have taken some steps up until now in terms of \$1 billion for the forestry industry; the northern Ontario heritage fund, \$1.3 billion to create 12,000 jobs; a new mining act; the northern highway strategy; infrastructure, \$470 million.

1120

There are far too many people not working in the north, there are far too many challenges of international commodity markets, but there are also some bright spots. The Ring of Fire has such enormous potential. We look forward to working with our northern mayors, our northern colleagues, and the members of this caucus whom the people of northern Ontario return to the Legislature. We have more to do. We will take steps to assist—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I've got to say, I don't think northern mayors are going to be very happy with that non-answer.

The Premier himself said recently that Ontario is not going to grow "by pulling stuff out of the ground." But northern resources generate billions of dollars for Ontario's economy and for this provincial government's coffers. More and more of the resources that are being extracted by Ontario workers are being sent somewhere else for processing. Why, then, does this government seem so content to sit idly by as northern Ontario loses good-paying, value-added jobs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: When we proceeded on building the subway and extending it and wanting to buy cars from Bombardier in Thunder Bay, what did that member and her party do? They said, "Don't do it. We don't agree with that."

I had a very good meeting with the mayor of Sudbury, a former federal New Democrat, and he thanked this government for its efforts on behalf of his community. I have had countless meetings with the mayors of Thunder Bay and Kenora and a variety of other communities. While they acknowledge and we acknowledge that there are enormous challenges, they also acknowledge and thank this government for responding in a variety of files.

What I'll say to the northern mayors but more importantly to those northerners who pay taxes, those northerners who are worried about their jobs or have lost their jobs, is that this government will continue to stand with them and make the kinds of investments that will help get northern Ontario through this enormously challenging time.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, yesterday the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth released his annual report. The independent advocate's office serves children and youth by highlighting their concerns related to child welfare, youth justice, mental health, provincial demonstration schools, First Nations and special needs.

The advocate's report raises many concerns related to access to supports for children with special needs, children facing mental health challenges, and youth living in care and those leaving care.

Minister, what has your ministry done in these service areas to enhance services for our vulnerable young people, and what are you doing to act on the concerns raised by the advocate in yesterday's report?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Ottawa Centre for his question but more particularly for his advocacy on behalf of youth and children in his community and beyond.

I'm very pleased to have a chance today to talk about the advocate's report. I want to thank the child advocate for the work that he does and the voice that he provides children and youth across the province. I want to thank him for working with us on these important issues. I'm so

very pleased to be part of a government that allowed and enabled the independence of the child advocate so that we can continue to work in partnership.

The issues that the advocate raises are the very ones that are active files within my ministry. I had the opportunity to work with him very closely just this week. He and I worked closely together on an issue of great importance to both of us.

Let me tell you some of the steps that our government is taking. We've increased base funding to children's mental health. We've invested more in the support for mental health services. We're transforming child welfare—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I've been proud to work closely in my riding of Ottawa Centre with great organizations like the Youth Services Bureau and Roberts/Smart Centre that offer a wide variety of important services to vulnerable young people.

However, Minister, the advocate's report specifically highlights some troubling conditions for Ontario's young aboriginal population. He cites high rates of attempted and completed suicide, and reports that these children, living on and off reserve, are often without adequate mental health services and that they live in unacceptable poverty.

How is your ministry looking to support and provide opportunities to Ontario's First Nations children and youth as we look forward to a better situation for these vulnerable communities?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I agree with the advocate that we have much more to do to support better outcomes for Ontario's aboriginal young people, and I am absolutely committed to doing that work.

At the end of last year we were able to provide an additional \$4.1 million to two aboriginal CASs, Tikinagan and Payukotayno, to ensure that they could continue to serve the children and families in their communities. We have now provided an additional \$2.5 million in funding to the six aboriginal CASs in recognition of the very issues that the advocate is raising.

I've recently returned from a trip to the far north, where I heard from chiefs, councils, teachers, foster parents, front-line workers and public health nurses, and it's clear to me that the issues these communities face are unique and require an all-hands-on-deck approach.

I work closely with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. We continue to tackle these critically important issues. There is a great deal more work to do, but we are 100% committed to doing that important work.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is also for the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Minister, last week I met with six representatives from York region's children's mental health agencies, and

their financial situation is nothing short of desperate. Their current funding only allows them to accommodate 16%—I said 16%—of the identified need, and that means that 84 out of every 100 children in York region needing mental health services are going without—84 out of 100 families being torn apart with no help in sight.

Minister, when will this government give children's mental health in York region the support that you have the responsibility to deliver?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity because I, too, was in York region last week and visited the York Centre for Children, Youth and Families, which is doing incredible work on the ground in communities, serving children who need that help and attention.

I am so proud to be part of a government that provided the first base funding increase in over a decade, in 2004-05, and another \$24.5 million in 2007-08. We've invested an additional \$64 million in support to expand mental health services for children and youth—an increase of 20%.

Is there more to do? Of course there is. But good work is being done in communities across the province. I've been talking to those groups about how we can better improve the services that they're providing in communities. It is something that we have very much focused our attention on.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The minister is certainly right: They are doing good work, and in spite of you.

In York region, Children's Mental Health Ontario has taken on the arduous task of child mental health support, yet York region only receives—here are the numbers—\$127 per child while the rest of the GTA gets \$221 per child. The people of York region are tired of being treated like poor cousins of the GTA by this Liberal government on this file and many other files.

Minister, will you commit today to fully funding the mandate of Children's Mental Health Ontario? Yes or no?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I heard some echoes in the House about where these questions are coming from, and I agree very much that this is quite rich coming from the other side.

I point to the Auditor General's report in 2002: "Since 1992, there have been no increases in base funding provided to community mental health agencies for programs that were operating at that time. One district health council noted that this has forced community mental health agencies 'to reduce services'...."

The good work that's being done in communities across the province is in partnership with our ministry. We continue to work on these critically important issues and expand services for communities. I've met on many occasions with Children's Mental Health Ontario. I'm learning about the innovative solutions that are being developed across the province. Yes, there's more work to do, but for the first time in many years, they have a government that is committed to doing this work in partnership with them.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps not surprisingly, my question is also for the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

A government study concludes that Hamilton and Niagara families face the highest wait times in Ontario for children's mental health services. They face delays in obtaining early intervention programs for children, waiting 68 days on average compared to 17 days in the rest of the province.

When will the government do the right thing and address this glaring disparity?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have a chance to talk about this important issue that exists in the community of Hamilton and beyond.

The reason that we know what is happening in Hamilton is because for the very first time our government has released a policy framework for child and youth mental health, and we are measuring and undertaking the most comprehensive data collection effort ever.

We're not scared of these issues. We understand the importance of the work being done in communities across the province. It is only by measuring your baseline and understanding the support that exists in communities that you can know where to focus your efforts to do more for the families, to respond to the families whose children need these services.

As I said to the Hamilton Spectator, it's incumbent upon all of us now to work together to improve the services for children in Hamilton and beyond.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The children of Hamilton and Niagara need action, not a bunch of talk. The minister's vague response isn't helping agencies like Lynwood Hall Child and Family Centre in Hamilton to deal with the severe and immediate growing need that's happening in our community. Children are in crisis, and this government is turning its back on them.

Will the minister agree right now to steady, dedicated funding that will rebuild the system and bring the wait times down to the provincial average?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I work closely with my colleague from Hamilton on this important issue, and we've made big investments, significant investments, in Hamilton's kids. We've invested \$15.6 million to support the establishment of 1,256 new licensed child care spaces; we've invested nearly \$3 million this year in five Hamilton OEYCs; we've provided 19 Hamilton agencies \$14.6 million in annualized children's mental health funding, and since 2003 these agencies have received a total of \$95.7 million in funding.

Is there more to do? Of course there is. Mapping out has allowed us to take a good, hard look at the services that do and, in some cases, do not exist. With that information, we will be able to continue to bring partners to the table, work with the parents, work with the commu-

ity providers to find innovative models and solutions to meet the needs of these kids, and that is exactly what we will do.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Many of my constituents have been worried about the access to family physicians and patient care in Ontario. They want good quality for their loved ones close to where they live and where they need it.

It's of the utmost importance that each Ontarian has access to a family doctor within their neighbourhood. It is crucial that we continue to achieve this goal so that Ontarians can get the care they need as fast as possible. With increases in chronic diseases over the years, it's also important that dietitians, nurses and other health care professionals are available to meet the various needs of all Ontarians.

Could the minister please update this House on the progress made to provide Ontarians with access to family doctors and other health care professionals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I couldn't agree more with the member from Peterborough. When it comes to access to family health care, we've made real progress and we're committed to making even more progress.

I'm very pleased to report that we have now created 170 family health teams across the province. These teams consist of doctors and nurses and other allied health care professionals, and I want you to know that we are planning even more.

The success of these teams has been nothing short of overwhelming. So far, these 170 teams are providing care to more than two million Ontarians; 334,000 of those had no access to primary care before the family health teams were created. So not only do Ontarians have better access to health care, but we've hired approximately 1,300 new allied health professionals, and these numbers will continue to grow as more become operational. In time—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Another area of importance for my constituents is the current supply of family doctors. Many people are worried that the effectiveness of family health teams is not yet proven. When people have serious health problems to discuss with their family doctor, they want to know that there is a constant supply of new physicians looking to set up practice in Ontario. I know that a lot of work has been done to increase the number of family health teams, but it's also important to attract doctors to the province and ensure job opportunities for Ontario medical students.

Can the minister please explain what the government is doing to increase the number of family doctors throughout the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The family health teams have proven to be so successful that they have actually captured the attention of the New England Journal of

Medicine, which has praised them, praised the collaborative approach and the patient-centred care.

Peterborough is an excellent example of success when it comes to family health teams. They have five family health teams, 81 doctors, 16 nurse practitioners, 24 registered nurses, six dietitians, eight mental health workers and five social workers all working in a collaborative family health team model. They're providing care to over 100,000 patients, including 17,000 who did not previously have access to a family doctor. But we've got to continue to increase the number of doctors in the province. There are more than 2,300 more practising today than in 2003, providing care to 900,000 more Ontarians. By 2013, we will have doubled the number of new doctors graduating every year.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is to the Deputy Premier or Acting Premier. We all know that the Xstrata smelter in Timmins is closing down, and the question has been brought forward on a number of occasions. However, the question hasn't been asked regarding the ONTC rail line. The number one customer for the ONTC rail line is the Xstrata smelter. What's going to happen to all the employees and to the ONTC rail line in northern Ontario should that smelter close?

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague points out the support that this government has provided to the ONTC after repeated cuts to that service under his government. It's passing strange that this party would now wake up to the challenges in northern Ontario. Year after year, they ignored the needs of the north and year after year, they did not respond to the legitimate aspirations of the people of the north.

There's no doubt that what's happening in Timmins is a very difficult circumstance. I know the Premier and my colleagues have spoken with the mayor of Timmins. I've been involved in some discussions. It's a difficult situation but the people in the north know they've got a government that understands their needs, understands their challenges and will continue to work with the north.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SMART METERS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I find it very concerning that this government has not taken into consideration how smart meters will ultimately penalize those that are home during the day in peak hours, such as seniors and stay-at-home parents with young children.

Ontarians will have to pay 9.3 cents per kilowatt hour for their electricity from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. and then again from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. it will be reduced to 8.0 cents per kilowatt hour, but when Ontarians sleep the cost is only 4.4 cents per kilowatt hour, from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m.

The McGuinty Liberals say that they are “encouraging us all to think about how and when we use electricity,” and “how working together to reduce our use at peak times makes good sense.” What doesn’t make good sense is to expect working parents to pay 9.3 cents per kilowatt hour to bathe their children, to cook dinner for their children and to do their laundry unless they wait until after 9 p.m.

The McGuinty Liberals are not working together with our seniors when they are encouraging them to keep the heat and the air conditioning low and off until after 9 p.m. The biggest burden is placed on Ontarians who are unable to change their lifestyle to accommodate the system.

ENERGY CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Energy marketers have been going through my riding selling electricity contracts and gas contracts to the public. This weekend, I went into the Bain Apartments Co-op in my riding and talked to people who had been subject to the sales pitch. My constituents told me that a number of times, when they asked whether the salespeople were from Toronto Hydro, they were told no, they were the people that supplied Toronto Hydro. I don’t know what the energy marketing bosses say, but I can tell you what’s being said at the door, that people are being given the impression that these marketing companies are providing Toronto Hydro with a supply of power.

I advised my constituents that the marketers weren’t companies that had their own electricity supply but made money selling the kinds of contracts they were flogging at the door. I advised them that my office deals with a lot of people who sign these contracts and find themselves paying much more than their neighbours and in a legal maze when they try to get out of the contracts—a maze of penalty payments and automatic renewals.

I say to anyone who has a salesperson who comes to their door trying to sell them a big money-saving electricity or gas contract that they should very politely say no and close the door. Do yourself a favour, don’t waste your time and don’t get your family or budget tied up in knots.

JOHN BABCOCK

Mr. David Zimmer: A few days ago, Canada’s last known First World War veteran passed away. John Babcock died at the age of 109 years.

He grew up on a farm in the Kingston area, in a family of 13 children. When he was only 16 years old, he joined the Canadian efforts in the First World War. He initially

hid his young age, but when the truth became known he was not permitted to fight on the front lines. He was sent instead to the Boys Battalion, where he eagerly trained to help his countrymen. Thankfully the war ended just before his 18th birthday, allowing him to return home.

The bravery and courage shown by John Babcock and his fellow soldiers make me feel proud and grateful for all that they did for this country. I am deeply saddened by the loss of this Canadian, our last living connection to the efforts of our country in the First World War.

I know you will all join me in honouring John Babcock by remembering his sacrifice and the sacrifice of all First World War veterans, just as we mourn his passing and offer our sincere condolences to his family and to his friends.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would ask all members and guests to join me in a moment of silence. This is truly a historic passing and very much an end of an era. I would ask that we join in remembrance of John Babcock, the last surviving veteran from Canada in the First World War.

The House observed a moment’s silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Brant on a point of order.

Mr. Dave Levac: Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence. I know it’s unusual, but—we normally do this, but to confirm with you that if we could, with unanimous consent, seek to take that statement and your wish to have us stand in honour of John Babcock and send it to the family.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): If the honourable member from Willowdale can be of any assistance in passing those comments on to the family, I think it would be very appropriate to have the Hansard sent to them.

Mr. David Zimmer: I will do that, Speaker. Thank you.

MUNICIPAL CONFERENCES

Mr. Ted Arnott: Today the annual conference of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Ontario Good Roads Association comes to an end. I want to recognize these two organizations and thank them for the outstanding public service that they perform, and thank all who participated in the conference.

In addition, I want to congratulate Mr. Paul Johnson of the county of Wellington, who becomes the president of Good Roads; and Mayor Chris White of the township of Guelph-Eramosa, who is the incoming president of ROMA. Through the leadership of these two gentlemen, Wellington county demonstrates its professionalism and its pride.

I was glad to take part in this year’s conference, as I have for the last 19 years. It’s not easy when the House is concurrently sitting with the conference. However, I found the subway is still the best and fastest way to go back and forth to the Royal York Hotel.

This year I was invited to meetings with the town of Erin, where we discussed the substandard ambulance service in eastern Wellington county with Ministry of

Health officials; and with the township of Puslinch, where we discussed the long-delayed improvements to Highway 6 south of Guelph, including the Morrison bypass, with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation.

I was also glad that our party's leader, Tim Hudak, made time to meet with the boards of ROMA and Good Roads and host a reception for delegates that was a good time for all.

Most of all, I enjoyed the opportunity to dialogue with our municipal partners and colleagues, who represent the first order of government, the one that's closest to the people we are privileged to serve.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm happy to report that the \$22 million our government has recently promised Ontario's children's aid societies will ensure that my city of London's CAS remains open.

The CAS of London and Middlesex was facing a financial crisis, but due to our government's actions, it will now receive a \$1.1-million lifeline. This money will oversee the daily operations of London's CAS, and the meaningful work that this agency does will continue.

To help these funds go further, a provincial commission is working on restructuring the current system to be more efficient and effective. This will ensure that our agencies will be able to have more resources at their disposal.

1510

The importance of our CAS is immeasurable. CAS employees and volunteers work tirelessly to serve and protect Ontario's most vulnerable population, our children. Of the numerous children's service agencies in Ontario, CAS is among the longest-running, with nearly 2,500 cases addressed in 2009.

I'm proud to say that our government's efforts have helped the CAS of London-Middlesex to keep its doors open. Also, when Minister Bentley, Minister Matthews and I met with them last week, we promised to continue to work with our agency in London to help them go through their difficult financial time, because they do an excellent job on behalf of all of us in the city of London and in Middlesex county.

LOCAL DEMOCRACY WEEK

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise and comment on Local Democracy Week, a program that was held here at Queen's Park on Friday, November 27. I thank the Speaker for being an active participant in organizing it.

It was my privilege to invite the students from Holy Trinity Catholic Secondary School in Courtice who attended. Principal Rosemary Livesey and teacher Bridget Girard are to be commended for their leadership in providing a suitable learning opportunity to the students.

Like all the approximately 200 youth who attended, the students from my riding were keenly interested and

impressed to find out all they could learn about politics and the political process by meeting the people who do it: the MPPs; city councillors, including David Miller; of course, our Speaker; and special guests.

The day was an outstanding program and included remarks by Craig Kielburger of Free the Children. Those students are the future of our Ontario. Indeed, judging from their interest, enthusiasm and advocacy, I'm confident that this will be a suitable future event for students to participate in, and I would encourage any student to participate in programs like it.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: As we all know, a series of earthquakes devastated the country of Haiti on January 12, 2010. About three million people have been affected by this disaster. Approximately 200,000 people lost their lives, not to mention the damage to their infrastructure.

It is heartwarming to see the outpouring of help and support from around the world. Today, I want to draw attention to one organization that took the lead to coordinate the Haiti, You Are Not Alone earthquake relief efforts.

The Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto is a not-for-profit organization in my riding of Scarborough-Rouge River. I'm so proud to inform the Legislature that the CCC, along with 80 organizations and businesses, came together and pledged their support to help.

They raised over \$250,000 for Canadian Red Cross Haiti earthquake relief through a variety of activities, which included a fundraising dinner, donations from a concert, interested classes and children at their Saturday school, as well as donations from the public. The federal government matches this amount, making it over a quarter of a million dollars raised.

I want to congratulate the chair, Dr. Ming-Tat Cheung, and the board of directors of the CCC for their leadership in this humanitarian effort. More support is needed, and I challenge organizations and businesses to join the efforts across the province and the country in helping the people of Haiti.

FIRST AID TRAINING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I rise in the House today to welcome the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation of Canada, better known as ACT, to Queen's Park. ACT is a multiple-award-winning national organization with a mission to promote health and empower Canadians to save lives.

Born in Ottawa in 1985, ACT began as a high school program in Ontario and has since grown to train over one million students across Canada. CPR training in high schools ensures that youth will have the skills and knowledge to save lives when an emergency strikes.

Ontario has been a leader in CPR training. We were the first province to fund CPR training in high schools and also the first province to fund the installation of defibrillators in public spaces.

At Queen's Park today, an automated external defibrillator awareness program will give all interested members and staff a demonstration in AED usage and CPR techniques. Also, ACT will be discussing the benefits of having CPR programs in our provincial high schools.

The success of ACT is based on a public-private partnership model, and ACT's core partners, Astra-Zeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Pfizer Canada and Sanofi-aventis, as well as the Ontario Trillium Foundation, should be commended on their commitment to helping to educate our young people in life-saving skills.

As members may be aware, around Queen's Park we have AED devices located on many floors and in many offices. These devices are proven technologies that save lives. In the event of the unthinkable, the device is there to assist, but only if you know how to use it.

I encourage all members to attend the ACT information session and demonstration so that if the time comes, we can all be better prepared to help save lives.

TESSA VIRTUE AND SCOTT MOIR

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I rise today to congratulate Canada's Olympic ice dance gold medallists Scott Moir of Ilderton in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and his partner, Tessa Virtue, of London.

On Monday night, hundreds of people gathered at the Ilderton Community Centre for the second time in a week to watch this pair skate. Tessa and Scott finished with a score that was six points ahead of the American silver medallists.

Their journey to the Olympics began at the young ages of seven and nine when they were first paired by Scott's mother and his Aunt Carol, both coaches at the Ilderton Skating Club.

For his grade 8 graduation, Scott identified as his life's goal his desire to participate in the Olympics. On Monday, he not only achieved that but, together with Tessa, became the youngest team to ever become Olympic ice dance champions and the first North American gold medallists in a sport that has historically been dominated by the Russians.

I want to commend the Virtue and Moir families and their supporting cast of coaches and choreographers. Underpinning the bright lights, the glamorous costumes and beautiful makeup is a foundation of family sacrifice, extensive financial commitment and long hours spent in attending practices, competitions and travel with Tessa and Scott.

On behalf of my constituents, I wish Tessa and Scott all the best in the upcoming world competitions. It is our hope that they will take some downtime to enjoy the Olympics.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I've laid upon the table the 2008-09

Annual Report of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on special education from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: In December 2008, the Auditor General presented to the Legislature his annual auditor's report. In section 3.14 he made some recommendations regarding special education in our schools. You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that the Auditor General's mandate has been expanded to include schools as well as ministries in our government.

We had three school boards appear in front of us: the Toronto District School Board, Simcoe County District School Board and Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board, in April 2009. The committee questioned these boards with regard to issues about things like the formal identification of students with special education needs and learning disabilities, wait times for psychological and other assessments, and ensuring accountability within the system to ensure that every special-needs education student was in fact being dealt with and their needs addressed.

The committee made 10 recommendations, including one recommendation that the ministry should amend regulation 181/98 to clearly state that identification, placement and review committees fully document the strength and needs of every student with special education needs, as well as the supports and services they require.

We want to thank the boards that were involved. We think the report is good and will advance the needs and the education of these very special individuals who need a little bit of extra help in our province.

With that, I would like to adjourn the debate.

Speaker of the House: Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

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

Bill 96, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings / Projet de loi 96, Loi visant à protéger les régimes d'épargne-retraite enregistrés.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

1520

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on the employment and training division from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This report of the public accounts committee relates to the employment and training division of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The committee that was dealing with apprenticeship training issues has, I believe, expressed some frustration in the report with the ability of the public to be able to be aware of exactly what is happening with regard to apprentices and the success of the programs.

The ministry had agreed to implement outcome-based measures, criteria and information as long ago as January 2004, yet there doesn't seem to be enough progress with regard to that. So the committee wants a report from the ministry as to when we are actually going to get outcomes and how many apprentices are completing each and every program. Unfortunately, we don't seem to have that data or information.

The committee has made an unusual request in asking the ministry to come back one year from the hearings, which took place in May 2009. In May 2010 we will be asking them how they are going to accurately measure the completion rates of apprenticeships. Otherwise, the government is hampered in not knowing exactly what steps to make going forward.

As well, we are interested in the journeyman-to-apprentice ratios, which have been a matter of controversy for some time. As you know, the Ontario College of Trades review has the authority now to strike those appropriate ratios, and we are asking the ministry to report to us by the end of 2010 as to what those ratios are.

These are but a few of the recommendations that we make with regard to the apprenticeship program. I commend the report for reading to everyone who is

interested in this particular matter, and with that I'd like to adjourn the debate.

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

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

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

Bill 106, An Act to provide for safer communities and neighbourhoods / Projet de loi 106, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des collectivités et des quartiers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax ... represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"This new tax, which we are calling the DST (Dalton sales tax), will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including: electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; magazines; Internet; home renovations; heating; air-conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales; rents will also go up; minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym fees will also be taxed;

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

"That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I agree with this petition and I will affix my name and give it to page Haleigh.

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents in Ottawa do not want the McGuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals over \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families.”

I agree with this petition. I’ll affix my name and give it to page Amy.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its 2007 report, concluded that without dramatic reductions in human-induced carbon dioxide emissions, climate change may bring ‘abrupt and irreversible effects on oceans, glaciers, land, coastlines and species;’ and

“Whereas no one group, country or continent is responsible for climate change, but where all human beings are collectively responsible for solving the problem; and

“Whereas the production of greenhouse gases in Canada has increased by 27% over 1990 levels; and

“Whereas our elected leaders have a responsibility to report to the public on their actions with respect to halting climate change for the sake of accountability; and

“Whereas youth in particular have a special interest in this issue, being those that will inherit this earth, our only home.

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario swiftly pass Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change.”

This is signed by students from St. Mark school. I put my signature to it in support of the petition and send it up with Quinton.

TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I’d also like to recognize guests in the gallery from the RV industry, as well as Camping in Ontario. One of the camp operators advises me that he operates a

campground that has a dress code. I thought that was interesting information.

I have a petition, as well:

“Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

“Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty’s new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy” and use “every day. A few examples include:” camping “coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming;” physiotherapy; “home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements”—just to name a few; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn’t raise taxes in the 2003 election,” if we recall. “However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

“Therefore we, the undersigned”—these are constituents from the riding of Durham—“petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario’s current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I’m pleased to sign and endorse this and hand it to page Brady on his last week here at Queen’s Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member for the petition and I trust that he’s a regular visitor to that camp he spoke of.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: What goes to camp stays at camp.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Sarnia–Lambton.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: I’m not going to touch that.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty’s plan to blend the PST with the GST into one 13% harmonized sales tax,” otherwise know as the HST, “represents one of the largest tax hikes in Ontario history, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

1530

“This new tax, which we are calling the DST, or the Dalton sales tax, will raise the cost of a long list of goods and services not previously subject to provincial sales tax, including but not exclusive of: electricity; home heating oil and gas at the pump; haircuts; magazines; Internet; home renovations; heating; air-conditioning repairs; accounting, legal and real estate fees; condo fees; new home sales; rents will also go up; minor hockey registration fees will increase; and green fees and gym fees”—also camping fees, as the member from Durham referred to;

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

“That the McGuinty government not impose this new tax on Ontario’s hard-working families and businesses.”

I sign this in agreement and send it down with Jordan.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FULL DAY EARLY LEARNING STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L’APPRENTISSAGE DES JEUNES ENFANTS À TEMPS PLEIN

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 23, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 242, An Act to amend the Education Act and certain other Acts in relation to early childhood educators, junior kindergarten and kindergarten, extended day programs and certain other matters / Projet de loi 242, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’éducation et d’autres lois en ce qui concerne les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la maternelle et le jardin d’enfants, les programmes de jour prolongé et d’autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. John O’Toole: First of all, I would like to seek unanimous consent to stand down our lead speaker, Elizabeth Witmer.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. John O’Toole: Thank you very much for that accommodation, Speaker and members.

Now, let’s be clear on Bill 242. We have caucused this, and I know our critic, Elizabeth Witmer, has great respect within the education community as a former educator, as a former chair of the school board, as well as having been the educator of the year and a former Minister of Education. She’s eminently qualified to comment on this and other topics, as is the member from Trinity–Spadina, who will likely be speaking right after me.

Now, I can only give a bit of context to the bill. My wife was an early childhood educator and became a qualified, regulated, licensed teacher in the elementary school setting in the primary grades. It is a special calling. I should compliment all of those working in daycare, in nurseries under the Day Nurseries Act, as well as in the educational system.

These are young children in the formative years of their lives, and I can tell you, as a parent of five children, it’s the most important gift a child receives: good, supportive care in an informed environment, a stimulating learning environment—not always a school, by the way, but necessarily in a home if it’s at all possible.

On bringing in a universal program that makes it accessible to everyone, I think Richard Florida and other academics who have written on this topic would condone

the idea of trying to provide this general benefit to the population. We do live and work in the economy that’s often referred to as the knowledge-based economy. A couple of the books that I’ve read recently would be Richard Florida’s work on the creative culture, as well as Friedman’s book on globalization—that’s *The World Is Flat*—and also *Hot, Flat and Crowded*. They all talk about the changing economy, so this is the context. Now, again, I have five grandchildren and I’m quite aware of how important it is to have a stimulating home life and full exposure to as many enrichments as possible.

When you’re talking about this in the general terms of the legislative policy, we had done a fair amount of work when we were in government. In fact, if you want to look right back to the 1990s, when Mr. Marchese was in government on that side, they had the Royal Commission on Learning. I had been a school trustee for a couple of terms myself when we brought in the whole idea of daycare attached to schools; that was brought in by your government. In fact, you did more to change the Education Act than anyone. You had the Royal Commission on Learning, the report called the *For the Love of Learning* with Monique Bégin, and the other work that was done. David Cooke was the Minister of Education.

We followed up on many of those changes, I might say, as well. The college of teachers, which they have now changed; they’ve made it the union of teachers, not the college of teachers. The curriculum rewrite is another good example.

So we were very supportive of education. Don’t ever misinterpret that for one second. We stand very proudly on addressing the inequities in education, public education specifically, that existed in this province, not through any deliberate fault but because of the way education was funded.

What happened at those times was, the royal commission’s fundamental theme was that education should be funded equitably across the province. What the case was prior to that commission was that education was funded on assessment. In other words, Toronto now, even today, has expenditure problems. I’ll get to that if I’m given enough time.

Here’s the issue: If you were assessment-rich, you could have a great educational system. Toronto spent twice as much as any board of education on education because they had the baseball park, whatever it’s called, and the hockey arenas and the Hummingbird Centre. They had lots of industrial/commercial assessment that doesn’t generate students. Small towns that don’t have any industrial/commercial tax base have a residential tax base that generates students.

The member from Kingston and the Islands, the Minister of the Environment, would know. He was the mayor of Kingston at one time. He would know; he’s from a similar generation. He would know that if you are assessment-poor, you couldn’t properly fund education.

I have to get to the very premise of what this legislation is about: It’s about fairness for the children at the end of the day. In my area, when I was a school

trustee, they spent less than \$5,000 per student. At the same time, the cities of Toronto, Ottawa and London—the wealthy boards, the wealthy areas—were spending \$8,000 and \$9,000 per student. That simply wasn't fair.

What we're doing here, in this attempt to bring early child care and call it early education for children—we're almost doomed to commit another error, a series of errors, by saying that one size fits all. Indeed, it doesn't. What about rural and remote Ontario? Three- and four-year-old children on a bus for two hours? Some of these—they have no clue on how to bring in a practical, workable solution to an important issue of equity and access.

So I put those premises on the board. I support conceptually the laudable objective. What I have trouble with is how you try to get there.

They grimace at what I'm saying, but in fact you think one size fits all. Northern Ontario will not have an easy time implementing this. Parts of Ontario are suffering from declining enrolment. Young families are moving out because they have jobs in urban centres. And I can tell you now that it takes a special type of person to be an early childhood educator.

In fact, when I reviewed the legislation—and I have, in detail. Thanks to the work of our critic, Elizabeth Witmer, our caucus has been brought up to speed. We believe this legislation, although well intended, simply does not get it right. In fact, the inequity has been perpetuated.

If you look at the bill itself—one of the ministers of the cabinet is here, talking. He should be listening, not talking. Here's the deal. Mr. Speaker, you know that in the budget announcement there's a commitment of—they spend billions of dollars like millions; they do—\$1.5 billion.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Some of the people over here should be quiet because they don't know what they're speaking about. I do, in this particular case.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: He can get up, in his two minutes, and I'll listen to him. I expect he'd listen to me right now.

Here's the deal. This is being implemented over six years. This will not provide this service to the people of Ontario on an equitable basis until 2016. Now, here's the truth: There's an election in 2011. They're doing it as an appeasement, because when does it start? The year of the election. How cynical. How cynical. Thank you—

Mr. Glen R. Murray: That would be next year.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, look, Glen, it might be different in Manitoba. I don't know; I can't speak to that.

But here's the deal: If it was going to be offered to all of the children, it would be even more difficult for us to reject it. Do you understand? But it isn't. I'm going to list—again, I may have to seek a special exemption because there is a lot more to get on the record than I've been given time to.

1540

Mr. Robert Bailey: You need more time, John.

Mr. John O'Toole: I need more time. But I want to put some important comments and observations on the record.

Mr. Robert Bailey: We'll ask for unanimous consent.

Mr. John O'Toole: We'll get unanimous consent because I know they want to hear more about this.

Here's the deal: It isn't equitably introduced, that's for sure. The other part is this: If you look at it—there was a comment made today from the Auditor General's report and the esteemed member from Ottawa-Orléans, that area—Mr. Sterling. That was about the access to special education. So parts of education today aren't being properly serviced.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Your guy is Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

Mr. John O'Toole: Whatever. They're both representing a large centre.

All I'm saying is, there isn't enough money in the educational system today for children with special needs—autism and other learning disabilities. There is simply not enough money today in the system. You're adding some money but not enough money for the system. So you're making the system worse.

I would say that is one of the things I see right now. Funding for special education is insufficient. That's been noted by the Auditor General, noted in the comments in the public accounts committee and reported to this House. I'm ashamed to say that the government is not likely going to react to those children and families suffering autism and other poorly delivered services in our schools.

Not only that, in introducing this, there is no capital money, no money for these children, for smaller tables, smaller desks, special play materials and resources. There is no capital money—none. So they're going to have to take these old classrooms, cut the legs off the desks or some stupid kind of accommodation. I have no idea. That's how it's going to look, though. You're going to have a half-assed job when you're done.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I apologize if I offended anyone. Nonetheless, here's the deal—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: You're not listening.

Not only that, they committed in the last election to have class sizes down to 20. What does this do, because of the numbers and the pupil-teacher ratio?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Capping.

Mr. John O'Toole: Capping. It's now going to be 26. Can you imagine adding two more, four more, five more children in each classroom for those teachers, who, I should say on the record, work hard. My wife just retired from teaching. It is a difficult job. It's a special calling. It's not just a job with good pay and good holidays. It's a lot of work.

Here's the deal, if you're really listening: Now they're going to have 20 of these little children—often many of

them aren't toilet-trained—on a bus, in snowsuits, getting dressed, getting undressed. Under the Day Nurseries Act, it's eight to one. You think you have it right? I can tell you now, you've designed it to fail. It's designed to fail but it will accommodate some of the union commitments you've made, the people who put up your signs and things.

I just want to get on the record here a few more things. There are a couple of things here that I think are quite suggestive. Here is one that you should pay attention to for a minute: Five years to get ready, the full-day-learning program “will require”—here's the key word. Remember, in law it's all about language. It says—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: You'll get your two minutes, if they give it to you, so just be quiet for a few seconds.

“Require collaboration”—now, look at that. It's going to require collaboration among the teachers, who will be the bosses, and the early childhood educators “to provide high quality and effective play-based education to support enhanced learning and cognitive, emotional and social development for children.”

Honest to God, it's so prescriptive that they've mandated here to collaborate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is that bad?

Mr. John O'Toole: Collaborate with whom? What is the parents' role in this? The parent is the primary educator. Do not dismember and disrespect the role of the family. There are different forms of families; I get that. But engage the parents and help them to be more effective in stimulating environments for their children. Don't think that the government should raise them from childhood till they're 30 years of age. That's entirely the role of the current government: They think they're going to engineer the world for everyone.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Oh, stop it.

Mr. John O'Toole: But, John, the truth will set you free. Listen up here.

Now, here's a very key part. This is under the Education Act. You see, early childhood educators who now have a college degree aren't regulated as such under the Education Act. There's an Education Act modification here. It says, “‘Designated early childhood educator’ means an early childhood educator who is appointed by a board to a position in junior kindergarten, kindergarten or extended day programs that is designated by the board.” What that means is, these people are going to be assistant teachers, really. If they had a Ph.D. on the learning grid, the way the union thing works, they would make more than the person who's an ECE—a lot more, probably double.

I think that's ineffective. I think they should introduce it, I think it should be done in a measured way, and I think it should be done as a complement to what already exists in many communities—and they should provide resources, perhaps not as much as there would be to run a school, because today, the grants per student are about \$7,000 in an elementary setting. That's \$3.5 million per school. What is the money spent on? It's payroll, basic-

ally; it's payroll. I'm telling you. I was a school trustee for about eight years so I have some clue about it.

All I'm saying is that first principles apply here: the important objective, probably widely supported, given that both adults in a family have to work today because of the high taxes municipally, provincially and federally, as well as other payroll taxes for government services—some of which are extremely important; I will complement that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: And the HST.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now they're going to add the HST, and by the time I get out of paying my property tax, I pretty well ruin 10 grand. That's just my property tax.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, I have the privilege of having it in a nice place, but it's an indicator, a barometer. I'm an ordinary guy with five children and I'm commenting in a very practical way to the bureaucrats who write this. There's nobody in this Legislature, including the minister, who had anything to do with writing the words, just the direction. I'm saying to you that the direction is faulty. It's faulty. The implementation has failed. It's not fair. It's going to take six years—that's two elections—and I would put it on the table now that it's my wish and my hope that the current McGuinty government won't be elected in 2011, based on a lot of reasons, not the least of which is this. But I'm going to be running because I intend to win, or I'd like to win.

Applause.

Mr. John O'Toole: I hear no applause from the other side.

I think there's more to this bill, and if anybody wants, they can look my website up. I'll put some information on there for you, because it's clear.

But here's the context of the economy: Can they afford to do this at this time? Rather than do it wrong, let's wait and get it right. Why implement it over six or seven years? Why have one size fits all? My riding is a lot of rural areas. Are they going to be operated in the summer, when the real farm work is done, or are they going to mandate it for the summer, when parents used to go on holidays? These are just practical questions that I'm raising. I can't see why there's such an upset to it.

Will they tax the children with your new tax that hasn't been completely outlined? The minister is here today. You're spending \$2.8 million more every hour than you're taking in as revenue—\$2.8 million more in spending. Wait a minute. That spending is money from the people working here. Your parents and the people who still have jobs in Ontario create the wealth that we get to spend. Always keep that in mind. If you're spending someone else's money, there's never enough; if you're spending your own, there's never enough—and that's the real test.

Plus, you have an operating deficit. Here's the issue here: About 20% of your total spending is debt. When they had these stimulus programs, they injected a lot of money into the economy—\$3 trillion in the United States. That infusion of money is future taxes. That extra

money creates more demand in the economy, which affects inflation. In economics, interest must always be greater than inflation, so interest is going to be up 2%. Many, many people are going to be struggling when the implications of stimulus spending kick in, and there's going to be a serious second notch to the current recessionary stuff; mark my words.

1550

I'm not trying to scare, but why would you add programs that are faulty in their design and in their delivery? I humbly ask you: a great program, don't wreck it, don't mess it up. Try to work with us. Our former Minister of Education, Elizabeth Witmer, could work co-operatively with you. Our leader, Tim Hudak, is committed to working with you to manage this so it is delivered fairly and effectively across the province of Ontario. But I don't see that.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Members who have been squawking will have two minutes to respond. But they've been given notes; they're going to vote for it just like a bunch of sheep.

I ask you to think about just how important it really is to get this right for our children for their future and our future. Our future is dependent on their success. If you screw this up, we'll all pay a deeper price, not just my five grandchildren but all your children and these pages here too.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want, for the record, to say a couple of things before I begin my one hour in about 10 minutes or so.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You could have spoken on behalf of the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and taken the whole hour.

I wanted to say that the member from Durham raises a few good points by way of his concerns, but I disagree fundamentally with his overall thrust. I disagree with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo as well. In fact, I disagree with the entire Conservative caucus on this.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We just can't agree on some things. I think they have an ideological proclivity toward certain things that I fundamentally disagree with; that is, they use financial affordability as a cover for their disagreement with these types of programs.

We believe these types of programs are essential and affordable. "If not now, when?" is the question I put to Liz Witmer on the Focus Ontario program when she said we can't afford it. I argued with her on the Focus Ontario program that they had eight and a half years of a good economy, and they had no interest in doing anything of that kind. If we can't do it when we have a good economy, when can we do it? That's the question I put to him.

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

Mr. Rick Johnson: I appreciate the comments that have been made by the members from Durham and Trinity–Spadina. To the member from Trinity–Spadina, I think we are on the same page on this one. I would like to remind the member from Durham that this is an optional program. Kindergarten in this province is optional. Parents don't have to do that.

I'm pleased that our government is moving on this now. I remember, when I became a school trustee in 1997, that the previous year, because of budget cuts, school boards across the province were given an option: no kindergarten, no junior kindergarten or you could have larger class sizes in primary if you wanted. My school board adjusted our class sizes. We kept class sizes at 20 in primary and re-implemented junior kindergarten in spite of the efforts of his government to cancel those programs.

This is something that he says is too costly to implement at this time. I believe we have to do it at this time. I'm disappointed that he has taken such a short-sighted view of this. Children in rural Ontario—we did the reports on this when I was with the school boards—arrive in grade 1 behind where they should be. This program allows our children to receive those bump-ups, to receive the extra help that is required so they can succeed. Whether they live in Kenora, Cornwall, Timmins or Toronto, children should be on the same footing.

I'm pleased that we are finally doing this. I believe we can't afford not to do this now. We want to make sure that our children have an advantage when they enter the workforce. Getting them started on the right foot is imperative to their ongoing success.

Remember that the Rozanski report, which was commissioned by the previous government, said, when it came out, that—for everyone to hear—the previous government had taken a billion dollars out of education. We've put that money back in and then some.

This is the right program to get our young children on the best foot.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes on this. I was in the backroom, listening intently to our friend from Durham. I always enjoy his theatrics, but I'm a little less enthused by his hyperbole. I did have an opportunity to pay some attention to his speech in the backroom. I didn't miss it all. I was here for some of it; I caught some in the backroom.

As is his style, he kind of rambled around a little bit. We're speaking today here about Bill 242, full-day learning, yet our friend from Durham found an opportunity to speak about many things that had absolutely nothing to do with full-day learning.

I shouldn't just say it's the member from Durham who does that. I suppose we're all likely guilty of that offence from time to time.

I did hear him talking, back there when I was listening, about autism. He found an opportunity within this particular piece of legislation to reference autism. I have

to go on the record and say that while we, as a government, feel there is still a tremendous amount more of work to be done on that file, clearly, for the member from Durham to stand in his place and suggest that, to this point so far, we have not made significant advances and invested heavily in autism in the province of Ontario, is, I would suggest, a bit unfortunate.

It also stands in stark contradiction to what they do often when they're in the Legislature, talking about the deficit facing the province of Ontario. He spent a great deal of his two minutes talking on items that he thinks we should spend more on than we're spending now. We've got a \$25-billion deficit, but he found time today to criticize us for not spending enough, not only on this thing but on many other issues that are relevant to the people in the province of Ontario.

I have to say that it's in contradiction, especially given that it's the position of that party that they were going to get rid of the health care premium. As I understand it, the health care premium was worth about \$3 billion in revenue to the province of Ontario. He's asking us to spend more. He's going to take money out of there—\$627 million on special education since 2003. I think the member missed the point a little bit.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this debate a little bit. I'm going to save some of my fire for another day.

There were some puzzled looks on some people's faces when my colleague across the way indicated that it's an optional program. As most would know, even junior and senior kindergarten is optional in the province of Ontario, but it is a practical application for our kids, and we want to continue to move the education system to create a seamless system that up until now has not actually been happening.

The seamless system that we're talking about is all of the new science and research that's making it quite clear that brain development is happening very quickly and functionally, for the rest of our lives, between zero and two years old, let alone two and five. The idea here is to make sure that we create the seamless system that provides us with the opportunity to get the best opportunity for those kids at the very beginning.

If you take a look at the economics behind this, you will have found that the dollar spent in front saves us anywhere, in some research, from \$7 to \$15 of costs that are added onto us after.

Not even to mention, on the discipline side, there has been research done that indicates that kids who have had these opportunities that we're presently talking about, in organized daycare provisions and early learning—because I think we want to make sure that we distinguish between the two. Early childhood educators come with a great knowledge of how that brain development takes place through play, and we're integrating it into a seamless system.

Will there be opportunity for people to stand up and say, "What about this? What about this?" Absolutely, and

quite frankly we should be having that discussion. But to come up with a wholesale reason why we shouldn't be doing it is absolutely going back into the 18th and 19th centuries instead of the 21st century.

A seamless system is what we're looking for, for the advantage of those kids for today. That's why we want to do this program.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased that I could comment to the extent that at least the other members listened for some of it, anyway. They got some of it, and some of it they just ignored.

1600

My riding of Durham services three major communities: Uxbridge, Scugog and Clarington. The population is in the order of about 120,000 and I have four school boards—two public and two separate—and a French language component as well. I have one school in each of the systems: Central Public School in Bowmanville and St. Elizabeth Catholic Elementary School in Bowmanville. In the north part of my riding, the Durham board has the Immaculate Conception school in Port Perry and the Durham district board has the Cartwright school in Blackstock.

My area is quite large; it goes from Northumberland all the way to York region. Some of those little children will be travelling a considerable amount of time to and from school. Hopefully, they won't be sleeping at school. Maybe they'll be sleeping in school because they're excited with their friends on the bus—I don't know.

On the surface, I agree with the thrust. The intention is laudable. The work that we did in government, some of you would recall—the member from Brant would know. We had the Honourable Margaret McCain, and Fraser Mustard did a report for us on the importance of early learning and early literacy.

Some of the programs that we set up in place were similar to this. They were optional and available, generally through learning centres within regions, and these will be closed under this legislation. Those were informal learning settings.

I think we're doing a respectable job and I commend those early childhood educators. But at the end of the time, in a more subdued note, I think that when I said not to do it, I said get it right. Implement it fairly. Take full advantage of some of Dr. Charles Pascal's report on how to provide the programming and the resources—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: Could I get more time? No? Okay, thank you.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to divide my time as best as I can into three parts. The first part will speak to our support of full-time JK and full-time SK, and support the arguments that the member from Brant was

getting at in terms of what the research says. The second part is to review the bill as much as I can and make some comments with respect to that. The third is to raise a whole lot of questions as to the implementation of the bill, which the member from Durham actually spoke to as well, in part. That's why I said I agree with some of the concerns he raises, because there are many concerns that I have.

If we do not implement this well, not only will it threaten the learning that we hoped would happen in the full-time JK-SK, but it could threaten some of our child care programs, which we never anticipated might happen. But based on the way I read this, I have a very strong sense that we could get this wrong, and I'm profoundly worried.

The first part is to simply say that in 1999, in that election, the New Democrats had put out a policy announcement that said that we would, if elected, introduce full-time JK and full-time SK. It was a promise that the Liberals picked up in 2003, and that's okay. We think it's good. When parties borrow from the other parties because they like some of the ideas, we think it's a good thing.

We believe that offering JK and SK on a full-time basis provides the opportunities to students to be able to do better in their academic years. If we prevent problems in the early years, the benefits are amazing—academically, emotionally, intellectually, psychologically and economically. Some of us know this, and some possibly choose to deny it or simply, out of ignorance, not know anything about it.

But the research on this is quite powerful. The evidence documents the economic benefits from public spending on quality early childhood programs: "University of Toronto economists showed a 2:1 payback on public funding for developmentally enriched child care created from the increased taxes paid by working parents, coupled with reduced social service and compensatory education costs.

"Over 40% of the public cost of Quebec's early childhood program is covered by the tax revenues from mothers who otherwise would not be working if low-cost child care was not available.

"A Manitoba study reveals that spending on early childhood programs has an economic multiplier effect on local economies, generating up to \$1.7 dollars for every \$1 spent.

"The Ypsilanti, Michigan, study has spent 40 years tracking the cost benefits of a preschool and family intervention program on a group of inner-city minority children. It calculates \$17 in health, justice, and social welfare savings for every \$1 spent on the program.

"Heckman calculates a 7:1 return on public investment for programs for young children compared to a 1:1 payback from adult education.

"There is a growing body of evidence that some of the greatest returns on taxpayers' investments are those targeted to Canada's youngest citizens. Every dollar spent in ensuring a healthy start in the early years will

reduce the long-term social costs associated with health care, addictions, crime, unemployment and welfare. As well, it will ensure Canadian children become better educated, well adjusted and more productive adults,' says Dr. David Butler-Jones, Canada's chief public health officer.

This is the kind of evidence that has been built up over the years that we believe we can't ignore.

I know the member from Durham made reference to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo as a former educator, a former trustee, chair of the board and former Minister of Education, as if to suggest that with that authority, they could simply oppose this bill, or at least what is being tried, by virtue of experience that she brings to the portfolio. My argument is that I disagree with her, of course respectfully. The argument she put in the Focus Ontario program we did is that we simply can't afford it. She did raise some issues of concern that I will speak to, but they seemed secondary to the primary argument, and that is, we simply can't afford it. The point I put to her was that the United Nations has told the world that Canada lags behind in early childhood education programs, both as it relates to Ontario and as it relates to Canada. It's not something that I think we can be proud of. We are not spending very much on early childhood education programs, whose benefits are clearly obvious to anybody who wants to see them. The studies are there. Sometimes we use these studies to make a point, but then in reality, when it comes to what we are actually doing, we are short of all the things that governments could and should be doing, in spite of the intentions, in spite of what governments say. We're lagging behind. Much more could be done in those early years to ensure that we have a better-educated young man and young woman who will save us so much money down the line because of what that education gives to that young man and that young woman.

Ideology should not enter into the picture, but it does. As political parties, we bring different political ideas to different social issues. As a party, New Democrats support early childhood programs because we believe they are good for men and women and they are good for children.

Both men and women are required to work these days. Even when some of them would like to stay at home, women do not have the luxury to do so. Men do not have the luxury, even when they would like to stay at home to take care of the children, to stay at home and watch the children. There is no such luxury for most of the human beings I know and relate to. Even among wealthy people, who can afford to have one of the partners stay at home, many of them choose to work. That is fine by me. But in order to give the protections to men and women that they so desperately need, to give them the security they so desperately want, to give them the opportunity for affordable programs so that they could go and work, in order to be able to help them to do that, we need to provide those programs. This is the type of program that can be very beneficial to students, to parents and to society in general.

1610

So I'm going to go through the bill and review aspects of it that I think need a comment. Then I'm going to review, with the Liberal members who are willing to listen, the many concerns I have about the bill, which I believe, if not properly implemented, will actually hurt their intentions and not benefit them and/or the young people they're trying to serve. I'm going to be reading from Bill 242. On page 2 of the bill, subsection 2(2):

"Subsection 8(1) of the act is amended by adding the following paragraph:

"Letter of permission, early childhood educator position

"10.1 grant a letter of permission to a board authorizing the board to appoint a person who is not an early childhood educator to a position designated by the board as requiring an early childhood educator if the minister is satisfied that no early childhood educator is available...."

I state my concern immediately. We realize that the letter of permission is not a new concept. But it has been overused in the past, when we actually hired teachers who didn't have the qualification, at least not the teacher requirement that people have to go through here, and accepted many on a letter of permission. In many cases, that would have been fine; in some cases, it might not have been such a great idea. But we hired them because we needed them, and we hired them because they were cheaper than to actually send would-be teachers to the faculty of education.

This plan provided by this government, this bill, is predicated upon having qualified early childhood educators in every kindergarten classroom. It's incumbent, in my view, upon the government to make certain that we have enough qualified people now and at every point in the rollout of this initiative. We will be monitoring the number of times the boards resort to this clause, and we suspect we will not be the only ones.

But the most significant point that I wanted to make is that as we begin, in the description of what's contained in this bill on page 2, we immediately have a section that says, "Grant a letter of permission to a board authorizing the board to appoint a person who is not an early childhood educator," signifying to me, from the very start, that we're probably not going to have early childhood educators in every school and that we're likely to have in every school someone who is not an early childhood educator. That worries me. If we believe that early childhood educators are good, as I believe indeed they are, and I have to argue—not argue, but I dare say, as a former teacher, that early childhood educators are as good as teachers at doing the job that is being asked of them. But to fall back on a position that says, "If we can't find them," immediately, in the first page of the bill, suggests to me that the government is looking for a cheaper way to provide support to the teacher in those programs. I wanted to state that for the record.

Page 3 of the bill: "Planning or delivering extended day programs, allocating resources to them, evaluating or monitoring them or detecting, monitoring and preventing

fraud or any unauthorized receipt of services or benefits related to them."

Section 3.2: "Providing for financial assistance related to extended day programs, evaluating or monitoring the provision of the assistance or detecting, monitoring and preventing fraud or any unauthorized receipt of benefits related to the assistance."

Like all the programs your government comes up with, you take the credit for the announcement and then leave all the tricky parts to the boards to work out. Extended-day programs within the Education Act are a brand new concept which will require adequate funding and constant oversight. Boards will require support, not only for the implementation but the administration of this plan. They will also require a lot more specific guidance than this bill provides.

In the past, when this government has been short on specifics, it is because they have been short on support and resources. I state this at the very outset: We are worried from the very beginning about what boards will be required to do because this says to the board what it is that they will be required to do, and immediately in my mind and in the minds of many chairs of boards across Ontario—public and Catholic and French-language boards—their question will be, "How much support are we going to get?" or, "How much of our resources will we be forced to divert from the programs we are providing at the moment to be able to support this new program?" That's the question I put to you, Speaker, as a member of the government, and the question I put to the two parliamentary assistants who are here today and to whoever else in the Liberal backbench is listening.

On the same page, subsection 4(1): "Governing all aspects of the operation of junior kindergarten and kindergarten, including regulations,

"i. respecting the schools at which junior kindergarten and kindergarten are required and are not required to be operated,

"ii. respecting the hours during which and the days on which a board is required and is not required to operate junior kindergarten and kindergarten in one or more schools of the board, and

"iii. respecting curriculum and programs for junior kindergarten and kindergarten."

The concern I have: We would like to see the details of this, particularly the programs, and we hope that they will be reasonable, appropriate and available well in advance of the actual commencement of the first programs.

On page 5 of the bill:

"Provide education and accommodation

"6.1 subject to payment of fees charged under section 260.1, provide education and adequate accommodation for pupils enrolled in extended day programs operated by the board....

"6.2 subject to paragraph 3.0.0.1 of subsection 8(1) and paragraph 6.1 of subsection 11(1), operate full day junior kindergartens and kindergartens on every school day, other than professional ... days, in every elementary school of the board."

How long—is the point I make—before parents get to know what the fees will be and what criteria and conditions are attached to each extended day program? That’s the question I put to the government.

Page 6: “subject to paragraph 3.0.0.1 of subsection 8(1) and paragraph 6.1 of subsection 11(1), designate at least one position in each junior kindergarten and kindergarten class in each school of the board as requiring an early childhood educator.” How is this going to work? That’s the question I ask. Is the one early childhood educator going to handle before and after class as well? Is the ECE, the early childhood educator, going to work from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. to cover the need? If not, who will be handling the extended day program? What if the school can’t find anyone else to fill the position?

1620

Also, I suggest that many will not have the early childhood education qualification contained in that section, which worries me. This is the section I referred to on page 2, which talks about not having early childhood educators but rather getting people who have a letter of permission to do this work. We have a lot of questions connected to this that the government hasn’t spoken to, that the parliamentary assistants have not spoken to and that the minister has not spoken to yet. We hope that at some point down the line, and hope the point will be soon, we can satisfy those who have these questions that their questions will be addressed so as to give them the comfort they’re looking for. Otherwise, they will be asking these questions, educators will be asking these questions, I’m assuming the various federations will be asking, and of course I will be asking as often as I can.

On that same page of the bill, “An early childhood educator appointed to a position under paragraph 12.0.2 of subsection (1) shall be in addition to the teacher assigned or appointed to teach the junior kindergarten or kindergarten class.” The question applies: Since the class sizes will be significantly increased, will there be a supply early childhood educator network set up to deal with sickness and absences to guarantee that classrooms will not have to function with their teacher alone? No one has spoken to this—not the minister, not the parliamentary assistant, not any staff of the ministry—so we really don’t have a clue how they’re going to handle this particular issue. If someone should fall sick, is the teacher required to do this alone? This would be absurd. I’m assuming the answer would be no. But what are the provisions that the government is making to deal with this particular problemo that I have raised?

On page 7 of the bill, “appoint persons to supervise teaching staff and persons in positions designated by the board as requiring an early childhood educator and every appointee shall hold the qualifications and perform the duties required under” the act. Will the province provide support to the boards every time they make a request to the board that they are required to do something, such as appoint persons to supervise teaching staff, or will the board be left alone with another bill and many more

obligations and requirements to meet without the adequate financial support? My fear is that they will be left alone to do this with more and more obligations that they will have to address on their own and limited funding, which they’ve been getting for many, many years, in spite of the remarks made by my friend for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who claims that more money has gone into the system than ever before.

On page 8, “Subject to the regulations, policies and guidelines made under this part, every board shall operate extended day programs in every elementary school of the board, on every school day, other than professional activity days, outside the time when junior kindergarten and kindergarten are operated in the school...”

My point is this: Exactly how are these limited and irregular times going to be covered, by whom and at what pay rate? If the government is going to establish a pay rate, as I believe they want to do, will the boards be stuck with the cost or will the government determine what that cost will be earlier on in the game so that boards know exactly what they’re dealing with and what financial support they’re going to get? Who’s going to cover those programs? By whom and at what pay rate? This is the question I put to those who will be responding to what I have to say.

Page 9, section 260.1(1): “Every board shall charge the fees prescribed under clause 260.6(1)(b) to parents of pupils enrolled in extended day programs....” Are the fees going to reflect the full cost, including the cost of space, maintenance and utilities? Will the fees be charged on a usage basis or as a package for care for the year of the term? The question speaks to the point that if a parent only needs two days, are they going to be charged for the usage of those two days or will it be done differently? Are the fees going to reflect the full cost, and are parents going to have that full responsibility or will boards be subsidizing that? If the subsidies are going to be in place, who will be getting that subsidy and/or will boards be required to pick up some of that cost of the subsidies?

These are questions that I ask, and hopefully, the parliamentary assistants and others will be given notes to be able to respond to them. The ministry has many, many staff at the back there behind the Speaker taking notes as I speak. I know that and I see that. I’m hoping that whoever’s taking notes there is quickly going to go to the civil servants to get some of these answers so that, as I ask them, she or he—the parliamentary assistants—can help me and make me feel better about how they’re going to handle some of these questions that I’ve been asking.

On the same page—

Mr. John O’Toole: Are you going to use all of your time, Rosie?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There’s so much. We’ve got to go through the bill.

“Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the right to attend a school of a board under part II, section 167.1 or section 293 does not confer a right to be enrolled in an extended day program operated by the board.” What does this mean? To the staff of the ministry

at the back, what does that mean exactly? If a child is in the full-day kindergarten program, is enrolment in the extended day program not automatic, or is it, and if it is, what does this mean?

For your benefit, I'll reread it: "Every board shall charge the fees prescribed under clause 260.6(1)(b) to parents of pupils enrolled in extended day programs operated by the board to recover the operating costs incurred by the board." Then, "Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the right to attend a school of a board under part II, section ... does not confer a right to be enrolled in an extended day program operated by the board." What does it mean? is the question I ask you.

The same page: "Without limiting the generality of subsection (1), the minister may issue a policy or guideline under subsection (1),

"(a) respecting the schools at which extended day programs are required and are not required...;

"(b) respecting the hours during which and the days on which extended day programs shall or may be operated;

"(c) respecting content for extended day programs;

"(d) requiring a board to establish criteria and conditions respecting which pupils may be enrolled in extended day programs...;

1630

"(e) specifying criteria and conditions that a board must establish and that a board may establish under clause (d);

"(f) authorizing a board to enrol children in extended day programs...;

"(i) the children have registered to be enrolled...."

Actually, I'm skipping some stuff.

Mr. Mike Colle: Good. Skip a lot.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The point I want to make to my friend Mike Colle, from Eglinton–Lawrence, is that these are all important details, as the member from Eglinton–Lawrence knows, but until we see these details, parents have no idea what they're really getting into or not getting into.

The whole thing is sitting in limbo, is one question. But the other point I wanted to make—I was getting tired, just reading all of the new obligations the board has to shoulder—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Embrace.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —and embrace, whether they like it or not. I'm thinking to myself, "Poor boards. As if they didn't have enough. As if they didn't have any deficits to worry about; as if they haven't been slashing programs to make ends meet, to balance their budgets, as is required by law, they now have this to worry about."

My good friend from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock might be able to answer some of these questions, because he was a former big shot in the OPSBA organization. What are boards going to do? What things will they have to put aside in order to be able to do this right? Remember, I spoke in favour of this bill. I speak in favour of the intent of having full-time JK and full-time SK. But when I read the bill and I read the obligations of boards and what they're required to do—how are they

going to do it when they're constantly saying, "Don't give us any more. But if you give us more to do, give us the money so that we can do it well"?

Mr. Mike Colle: "Show us the money."

Mr. Rosario Marchese: "Show us the money," is the question. "Show us the money and the support so we could do this well."

By the way, Mike, that was a long page of "the board shall do this, the board shall do that." I'm going to go to the next page, because there's more.

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations,

"(a) governing all aspects of the operation of extended day programs;

"(b) governing the amount of fees that a board may charge...;

"(c) governing the time of payment of fees...;

"(d) respecting operating costs for the purposes of subsection"—this is another repeat of number 8.

Are the fees going to reflect the full cost, including the cost of the space, maintenance and utilities? Or are boards going to have to pick up the extra cost? Will the fees be charged on a usage basis or as a package for the care of the year or the term? We don't know. No answers have been given.

Further, on that page:

"(3) In making a regulation under clause (1)(b), the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall recognize that the fees to be charged by a board must bear a reasonable relationship to the operating costs incurred by the board."

The question to my buddy from Haliburton is, what does "reasonable relationship" mean? Is the government worried that the boards might charge a little more than they should? Is that what it means? Or does it mean something else? I don't know. It would be nice to define what "reasonable relationship" means, because I don't know. Will this "reasonable relationship," in terms of fees paid, vary from board to board?

By the way, who qualifies for subsidies? We don't know.

The ongoing question is, will the minister pay the full load of these programs?

Further, on that page:

"The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations respecting the provision of financial assistance to persons who are charged fees ... including regulations,

"(a) providing for such positions as the Lieutenant Governor in Council ... authorizing the minister and such other persons or entities as may be specified in the regulations to appoint persons or entities to the positions referred to in clause (a)...."

Mike, from Eglinton–Lawrence, it's another long list. You see, I'm losing my voice. I'm just getting tired of all the things the board is required to do. Another glass of water would be very helpful. Thanks so much.

"Respecting the powers, duties and functions" of this and that, "designating geographic areas for the purpose of managing the provision of the financial assistance ...

respecting agreements that may be entered into by the minister....”

Mike, do you get the point? If I were the director of education, I would simply—will I have enough hair at the end of this; will it be grey or will it disappear? Those are the questions that every director would be asking, irrespective of gender. Will the hair be grey or will it disappear?

Mr. Mike Colle: You sound like T.S. Eliot.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He was a wonderful poet, T.S. Eliot. I wish I were as good as him.

Mr. Mike Colle: Should I eat an orange?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That was a beautiful poem, actually. But we don't have time for that, Mike.

Here's the question I want to ask on that. The provision of financial assistance is a very sensitive and time-consuming task that cannot be dumped on school boards.

Mr. Mike Colle: T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland*. It's called *The Wasteland*.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm not sure it was *The Wasteland*.

What will be the responsibility of schools and boards, and who will make the final call on this? Will the amount available to each school or board be capped? Will the amount available in the province be capped the same way special education funding is capped, regardless of need? These are serious questions that I put to my friend from Haliburton and others who are about to get into the debate. We'll see. I'm not quite sure who is speaking, so I don't know.

There is more. There is so much more. I'm trying to get through the bill, you understand.

On page 14 of the bill:

“It is the duty of the following persons to coordinate the matters listed in subsection (2) and to co-operate with each other with respect to those matters:

“1. Teachers.

“2. Temporary teachers.

“3. Designated early childhood educators.

“4. Persons who, under the authority of a letter of permission, are appointed by a board....”

“The matters referred to in subsection (1) are:

“2. Observing, monitoring and assessing the development of pupils in junior kindergarten, kindergarten and extended day programs.

“3. Maintaining a healthy physical, emotional and social learning environment.

“4. Communicating with families.

“5. Performing all duties assigned to them by the principal with respect to junior kindergarten, kindergarten and extended day programs.”

Mike Colle, my friend from Eglinton-Lawrence, do you feel the weight? David from Brant, if you were a principal, and, Mike, if you were a teacher—and you were a teacher; we have no directors in this place—think of this. If you have to do all this—I'm just reading all the extra stuff you do.

Mr. Dave Levac: I had a daycare centre in my school.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. The Toronto board is full of child care centres, and many other boards have them too. Not as much as we did—I was there as a trustee on the Toronto board.

Just think of the additional obligations you now have. Same pay, with all the duties and responsibilities you have, and now you're taking on something else. You, as a principal, might say, “This is good; I like it,” but are you going to get the resources to do the job well? That's the question. Or will you have to leave something else in order to do this? That's the other question.

Legislating a duty to co-operate hardly recognizes the complexity of the actual situation that this legislation is creating. The success of this program will require that the ministry assume more responsibility than simply legislating co-operation. Isn't it beautiful that a minister, with the former parliamentary assistant of education, could simply legislate and then have boards, some of whom were there as chairs of OPSBA and others, deal with all of the obligations that come with yet another responsibility that you have to undertake? It's tough.

1640

It's easy to legislate. “You shall do thus,” and then you're done; then you clean your hands. Then, in typical Liberal fashion, you say, “Oh, but we provide so much money. Oh, they're just so loaded with money they should be able to do the job. In fact, we've given \$5 billion extra. With that \$5 billion, my God, you should be able to do everything.” Boards are facing deficits every year and we keep saying, “But they got \$5 billion more than ever before.” They're barely maintaining what they've got and they've been cutting programs everywhere in Ontario to balance their budgets. The money's simply not enough.

This is a good program, and that the money is not going to be there is my fear.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's what I said, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's why I agreed with you in some parts of what you said. I did say that. I did say that the member from Durham raised some good questions and some good concerns and that I would speak to them; I did say that. I am raising many more concerns than the member from Durham raised, but they supplement what he was trying to get at: We are in disagreement with the fundamental premise of what they're doing. But you raise some good questions.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They don't. Ideologically, they don't support it. I know that.

On page 16 of the bill—you see? It's long. If you want to do a good analysis, you've got to go through it. Otherwise, people will simply say you're blah, blah, blah-ing; you're not saying anything, right?

Page 16: “Subject to the regulations, every board may establish and implement an induction program”—

Mr. Mike Colle: What's that?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They're professional development kinds of days. It's training, induction

programs—“for its new designated early childhood educators.”

This is what will be required of them:

“1. An orientation for new designated early childhood educators.

“2. Mentoring for new designated early childhood educators.

“3. Professional development and training appropriate for the new designated early childhood educators.

“4. Such other elements as are prescribed.”

Young teachers have been telling us for years that this type of support is sadly lacking. If the government wants to provide worthwhile induction for early childhood educators, then there will have to be more of a commitment than just listing the elements. Expertise, time, coverage and resources will have to be provided. I fear, my friends from Brant and Eglinton–Lawrence—former educators—that your former educators are not going to get the support they need. That’s my fear.

I know that you want to say, “I don’t know. I’m not sure it’s true.” You’ll want to say that because you want to be optimistic—and besides, you’re a member of the government, so you have to be positive about this initiative. But I can tell you, based on my experience as a teacher, a school trustee and a critic for a long time, we’re not giving the support to teachers and boards that is desperately required, and I really, really am worried about it.

There’s more in the bill, but I’m going to leave the bill for now and get to some other points of contention.

The concern I have is that the McGuinty government continues to make highly publicized announcements that are long on media and short on substance. We totally support all-day learning, but we expressed many concerns when the government rolled out this program, and this piece of legislation does little to alleviate our concerns and the concerns of parents and care providers around the province. The announcement does commit a fixed sum of money to the creation of full-day kindergarten classes in Ontario, but the actual mechanisms to make it happen are not specified. There has been, in my view, a serious lack of attention paid to the actual implementation of this program.

We have waited for a long time for this. Many families will wait for five more years. Even though Monsieur Pascal recommended three, you obviously determined that you can’t do it in three. You will do it in five, even though the minister, in her remarks, said the other day that we’re going to have to act and act now. In spite that of comment, this program will be unfolded over the next five years—

Mr. Mike Colle: Naples wasn’t built in a day.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But your minister said we’re going to do it today. But it won’t be done today, it’ll be done in five years, and that will put many children behind, assuming that it would be rolled out fully in five years. And I predict, by the way, it will be rolled out in more years than five. May I dare suggest that it will be at least seven, and it will go to 10. That is what I suggest.

Now, if, God forbid, you should be re-elected, we’ll wait and see what will happen. But on the other hand, I’m profoundly worried that if the Tories get elected, that will create another headache vis-à-vis this particular program. So it’s hard to say—who do you do you want there, right? Who do you want there? The best option would be New Democrats. If you want this program to be implemented, you would have to count on New Democrats, and I would be happy to be that minister, to be able to do it. I would be happy to take on that job.

Mr. John O’Toole: What’s Floyd Laughren doing these days?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Retired.

The question we ask: Will the funding for the initial rollout be distributed equitably across the province or will it go where there is space? Will the programs approved in the first few years be needs-based or just space-based? Sadly, I believe that this government is moving quickly to prove that it’s doing the job of getting these programs under way, and it will not be needs-based; i.e., where you’ve got socioeconomic issues that you want to address, where you want to be able to provide the compensatory education programs that you should—and as a result you lose out on the possible equity issues as a way of making sure that you’re seen to be doing well in your first year, and therefore you’re going to put the programs where there is space and it’s easy. That is fundamentally wrong, and I believe that’s what you’re about to do in your first year.

There will not be any equity, I guarantee it, in the first year because you want to get it out the door and you want to go outside the province as best and as quickly as you can without spending a dime on capital expenditures and prove to the public that you’ve started and you’re doing it right away, but will it not be needs-based. That, I put to you, is wrong in terms of who needs the program more than others.

If we have a middle-class school with middle-class professional kids, they don’t need that program as much and as fast as those kids who have economic issues to deal with, who have poverty issues to deal with, who have problems of all sorts, whether it be mental illness, substance abuse or any other kind of problem that families have to face.

We are concerned profoundly that the class size—the average class size, is what you’ve said—of 26 is an average, I repeat, and our concern is that class sizes may become too large, like many of our current grade 4 to grade 8 classes where there is no cap. Where you capped primary grades at 20, what happened, from our sources, i.e., teachers, is that the class sizes in grades 4 to 8 jumped through the roof. You track conveniently how many of your schools have capped the students at the primary grades, but you refuse to track what the class sizes are in grades 4 to 8, and we know they’re large from parents who tell us how big some of those class sizes are. This is about to happen in this program as well.

1650

I put to you that an average of 26 means many classes will be higher. Even with two adults, there are practical problems caused by having 30 four-year-olds in one space.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thirty-four-year-olds?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thirty students who are four-year-olds in one space.

You have to consider snacks. As the member from Durham raised, based on the experience of his spouse, who obviously knew what she was talking about, you've got to consider snacks.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Magnare, Michael. Snacks. Nap time. Washroom accompaniment etc.

See, you haven't thought this through. You want to save some money, so you want big class sizes. That's why you want not necessarily to have early childhood educators, but people who have a letter of permission. That's why you started with that bill on page 2. I understand what you're getting at.

Large class sizes for four-year-olds is simply not going to work. If you want a learning environment, if you actually want kids to learn, and you have 30 four-year-olds in that classroom, not much learning is going to happen, and the effect of it is that it will be worse than having those children in a child care centre. It will be worse. If you have 26 or 30 or 32 kids in that classroom, no learning will take place with those four-year-olds. When you take into account the incredible pressures that the teacher will have on how you manage four-year-old kids who need to sleep, who have different sleeping patterns, who get sick and need to be taken care of, who need to go to the washroom, and you're going to have an early childhood educator accompany that one child, or maybe accompany two or three, and the teacher will be left alone with 27 students—the minister has not thought about this. The parliamentary assistants have to think about this. The government has to speak to this as a problem. And I am left with little assurance from anyone that they actually know what they're doing or that they actually have a handle on this.

Parents expect this to be all-day learning, not all-day babysitting, which might turn out to be the case if we don't deal with the concerns I'm raising. From an instructional point of view, the large numbers will limit learning. Many parents will discover that their children did more learning in the daycare they were in before this program.

Charles Pascal called for an Early Years division in the Ministry of Education to develop and implement a coordinated policy around child care. We are sure that this announcement stops well short of the completely integrated child care plan put forward. We are still awaiting the details of the actual form which the typical class will take. We want to see the actual distribution of workload between the teachers and the early childhood educators. The government is dumping all of these details on the school board and teachers' federations, and there

are few specifics in this bill to alleviate the concerns felt by many.

Many boards are already claiming that the government is not providing adequate funding to pay the going rate for early childhood educators. The government's pitiful education funding formula already places boards in a position of having to take from one program to pay for another. The question now is what programs will have to be cut to pay for an inadequately funded all-day learning program, and that's the fear that I express today, that if we do not fund this properly, in spite of your protestations to the contrary, i.e., that you're going to spend \$200 million or \$300 million, as if somehow this is going to be enough—in spite of those protestations and statements that you're making, it will put boards in a position to have to cut other programs to be able to deliver on this program.

Consideration must be given to the potential loss of revenue for daycares, which may put them at risk or drive up costs to parents whose children remain in daycares.

We are worried that when you take these children from a child care and put them in a classroom, you put that child care centre in a position of liability, in a vulnerable position of not being able to sustain itself, because if they don't get the funding they need from these extra programs and are left with very expensive programs to manage, they will not be able to stay open. That is a fear that all child care centres are speaking about, speaking to. They have legitimate concerns that this government has not dealt with it.

In addition to this worry is the worry that the \$63 million that the federal government released four years ago on the Best Start program will have dried up by the end of this year. Once those dollars have dried up, thousands of programs across Ontario will disappear. In Toronto alone, they estimate that 5,000 subsidized child care programs will disappear. That is a huge loss to this board. Windsor is closing some programs immediately—and already—as a way of dealing with these problems, because cities do not have enough money to be able to continue with these programs.

There have been some suggestions that daycares should be allowed to lower standards and increase the number of children permitted per caregiver to cope with the changes. I want to read quickly from that article written by Laurie Monsebraaten from the Toronto Star, who says, "Ontario is considering regulatory changes that would allow fewer staff to care for larger groups of young children in daycares as the province moves to all-day kindergarten."

What is that about? That is about wanting to save money, but it puts at risk the relationship that those early childhood educators have with the children they're caring for. It's a relationship that has been finely built over the years, a ratio that has been put in place to protect the educator and those children and what they're trying to do. The government is talking about increasing those numbers as a way of saving money at a time when the government wants to introduce full-time JK and SK. It's

wrong, and we're moving in a dangerous direction. That's what I put to Liberals.

This is why I support Mr. Pascal's comments when he says, "The current fragmented patchwork of early childhood services too often fails the best interests of our children, frustrates families and educators, and wastes resources." He's fundamentally correct, and that is a warning he was putting to you in the report that he submitted to the government.

That is why Pascal talked about the need to create a continuum of early learning, child care and family supports for children from the prenatal period through adolescence under the leadership of the Minister of Education: because he clearly understands that you can't take this little piece, because, as you're doing it, you're putting at risk many other programs. He understood, and he knew this is what would happen if you don't do the full continuum.

He also says, "The Ministry of Education should establish an Early Years division to develop and implement an Early Years policy framework that will create continuity of early learning experiences for children from zero to eight years of age." He also says, "The Early Years policy framework should also guide the transformation of programming for Ontario's youngest learners. Municipal authorities, with the necessary resources, should be mandated to plan, develop, support, and monitor an integrated network of Best Start child and family centres providing families with:

"—flexible part-time/full-time/full-year early learning/care options for children...;

"—prenatal and postnatal information and supports;

"—parenting and family support programming, including home visiting, family literacy, and playgroups;

"—nutrition and nutrition counselling;

"—early identification and intervention resources...."

1700

Pascal has it right. If we do what we're doing, we're entering a fragmented approach, a patchwork, a cherry-picking that may sound good from a political point of view, but if you don't have the continuum of services, if you don't provide the services that are required, as he explained, you could be putting into jeopardy some of the programs that I made mention of, and you put in jeopardy the very programs that I support. I am a strong supporter of these programs, but I worry profoundly about the potential to do this wrong. And if we do it wrong, it's not me who will lose; it's not even the Liberal government that is going to lose; it will be the children we're trying to serve and protect and help, and it will be their parents who have high expectations of you and what it is they hoped you would do.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: First, I wanted to take a second or two to congratulate the minister. I haven't had the opportunity to speak to a bill she has brought forward. Minister Dombrowsky comes to this portfolio with a history on the front bench as a minister and a history here

in this place as a legislator, and I want to congratulate her on her new role.

I listened as intently as I could to the hour leadoff by the member from Trinity–Spadina. I'm almost glad he didn't have much more time, because he would have had to present his criticism, as a critic, in volumes of questions for the ministry staff and the parliamentary assistant at that point. He certainly spent his time wisely and well as a critic, putting forward the issues as he sees them and the concerns that he has.

I want to return briefly, though, to the legislation. He said clearly that he's a supporter of investing in early learning for children, as being important to their future. To come back to the bill, that's what the bill is about; that's what the program is about. It's about investing in children and giving them the best opportunity at the earliest possible stages to prepare them for a future that will be different than the future they might otherwise have had. The phasing in of a program of this nature is a prudent approach to take. It's both fiscally prudent, given the economic climate, and prudent from the standpoint of, as he said, getting it right, because clearly over time there will be a need to modify and tweak as one goes to make sure it's right. By phasing, that gives us that opportunity.

Two minutes goes very, very quickly.

I appreciated the member from Trinity–Spadina as the critic and listened carefully, and I'm sure we are anxious to respond—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened intently to the member from Trinity–Spadina, and he's right. I'm quite complimentary. He has followed education for most of the time I've been here, 15 years, in a very constructive way. He always has the right intentions and the right objectives, a laudable goal. I agree with what he was trying to conclude in his one-hour presentation, that it's a good program. It's the implementation that he has concerns with, and the consistency of programming. I concur with him in that respect. It's not to justify my position on the economic arguments—we differ on that. But on the fundamentals of the purpose of the policy, I think we're completely in line. We think it's the right thing at the right time, but how you pay for it is where we diverge.

When you look at the situation in Ontario today, an article in the paper yesterday made it very clear that the Toronto board has a deficit. I'm going to quote it here. Trustee Josh Matlow says—we have a \$25-million deficit, and he's saying that the school board has a financing problem. We also know from the Auditor General that special education is in peril. So slow down. You're drinking from a fire hose here. You're spending more money than you've got, and you may yourself have to cut back on some of the program spending. One of the members suggested that I was arguing they should spend more money. I'm arguing you should be careful of the money you're spending because you are going to set up programs that you might have to dismantle.

So I find that his comments were very direct and quite helpful. I hope that those listening will address those amendments when it comes to public hearings on this.

I'm looking forward to our critic as well, or our former critic of education, Ms. Savoline, who will bring another point of view to the discussion.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to chime in on one of the points that my colleague made, and that is the issue having to do with how French Catholic school boards who have been—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They're all agitated here. I can't believe it. Terrible.

I just want to chime in and say that there is an issue in regards to a lot of French boards, French Catholic boards specifically in my region, who have been offering junior kindergarten to their students for some time. There is a sense out there on the part of some of the trustees and certainly the director of education that in the end they may end up getting penalized as a result of having already budgeted for that some time ago and having offered full-time kindergarten to kids in JK—or full-time JK, I should say, to the kids in those areas. So I think that's a real concern and something that we need to turn our attention to, because certainly I think we want to reward those who have been doing this because they thought it was important. There are a number of school boards across Ontario, and particularly in our area the French Catholic board, le conseil des Grandes Rivières, who have actually been providing this to families and to children for some time. We need to ensure that they're not sort of lost in the wash when it comes to how the funding is going to flow forward. The government has announced there are a number of school boards that will be funded for full-time JK, and those have been announced, but how do you deal with those that have already been doing it?

So I just urge the government to take that into consideration and that we need to find some way of making sure those who have been on the vanguard are not punished for being ahead of the pack.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: The member from Trinity–Spadina said in there—I was listening carefully, and he basically said he was going to accuse me of being optimistic. Guilty. I'm optimistic. In my 25 years in education, both at all levels plus being a principal, when we were given challenges, of which there were many during my tenure as an educator, we rose to the occasion. We made it work. There were some difficult waters at times, and I would say respectfully, and I think he does agree with me on this, that the teachers, the principal, the support staff, the caretakers, the secretaries were marvellous people who always focused on getting the job done for those kids. I don't think you have any qualm with that.

I also want to make this other point that I hope he can pick up on, and that is that I'm in the crow's nest; I'm looking out to the future and I'm working forward. If I'm doing that, there are going to be some details that we've got to pick up on, and I thank the member for bringing up some of the concerns, along with the member from Timmins–James Bay, making sure that we get the details right. But for now I'm talking about this legislation being one of the most progressive pieces and changes to our educational system to make it seamless that we have seen in decades, maybe of all time, in terms of connecting our young learners to the system quicker and doing it in a way that all our experts are telling us it should be done.

So I'm glad he does acknowledge that. I know he's going to be presenting us with some options that need to be digested to ensure that some of the details are done, the minutiae part. I don't have any qualms with his concerns. I don't think they're as bad as what he's portraying them as. I think he is predicting hell and high water and the demise of kids as we know it, but I don't agree with him.

I want to listen carefully to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, who is going to be presenting us with an optimistic view of what our system is going to look like, and I know that she's going to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Trinity–Spadina, you have up to two minutes to respond.

1710

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I really want to be optimistic, member from Brant; I just don't see it, though. But it's important to be proven wrong; it's so good to be proven wrong. And if you address some of the concerns I've raised, I will admit it, no doubt. I will admit it, because clearly, if I give you these questions and you address them and you do so in a way that deals with them, what else would I say except, "At least you did it"?

But I'm worried that I'm not hearing any positive remarks about how this will unfold. I know that it's an easy answer to say, "We have to take our time; we will be dealing with it; blah, blah," but I worry that it's mostly blah, blah rather than putting substance to it.

I know the minister says that people have been talking for over a generation about the importance of a systematic approach to early learning. I'm not sure we're taking a systematic approach. That's why I quoted Pascal as a way of saying that we've got to worry about all of the potential impacts, from the early years through the later years. Otherwise, you're going to fragment the delivery of this program.

He was worried; I am profoundly worried. I know your minister said that we went about this in a methodical way. I'm concerned that we're not doing that. You say that your minister says that, but I just don't see it in practice.

We'll have to wait and see. I know you have faith, as indeed the member from Kitchener–Conestoga has faith in your minister and your government. I hope that we will see, through the hearings and the deputations, what

remarks your parliamentary assistant is going to say that will alleviate my concerns and the concerns of deputants.

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

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm pleased to join the debate today, and I thank my colleague the member from Brant for his comments about optimism. As a former educator and as a colleague, a principal, he understands that this really is good news, and I thank him for that.

I do have a lot to say and I only have 20 minutes, so as the teacher I am, I'll try to make it succinct. I'd like to stick to the facts because I think it's important that we cover the facts here today and dispel any myths that may be out there.

I did want to say hello to my 96-year-old uncle who's watching today, Uncle Solomon. He's watching with my husband, Richard, so that's pretty exciting.

As a debating coach, the one thing we would always teach our students who were learning on the debate team—that's action for you—was to clearly state your point before you began the debate. It's pretty simple here today to clearly state the point that Bill 242, full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario, is the single most important thing we can do for our children, for our families, for our communities and for the future of this province. There we have the point. I think it's pretty clear.

If we take a look at how this has come together, I wanted to also start with a quote, as I'm prone to do once in a while as an English teacher. I wanted to refer to Denis Waitley. Denis is an author and a global leader in education and business. He says:

"All of the top achievers I know are lifelong learners ... looking for new skills, insights and ideas. If they're not learning at a very early age, they're not growing and they're not moving towards excellence."

That's what we're talking about here in the House today. Bill 242 does exactly that: It moves the students of Ontario towards excellence, towards being competitive in a global economy in a time when education is the absolute key to the success of our future as individuals, as communities and as a province.

In November 2007, the Premier asked Dr. Pascal to recommend the best way to implement full-day learning. Dr. Pascal's report, *With Our Best Future in Mind*, came up with some all-encompassing comments, thoughts and ideas. Dr. Pascal points out that more than one in four children who enter grade 1 are significantly behind their peers.

I say, sitting in the House all afternoon, I heard the opposition say, "Let's wait. Now is not the time." If we have one in four children in the province who are behind their peers and the time is not now, I stand baffled. The time is absolutely now that we implement Bill 242 and look at full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario.

Dr. Pascal also says that, "Establishing a strong foundation in the early years, and building on it is the single-most powerful key to Ontario's social and eco-

nomie future." We talk about the best future; we want that for our children. The best future we can have for our children is one that is "healthy and secure," he says. It's a future where students are "emotionally and socially competent." He talks about a future where students are "eager, confident and successful learners," and he talks about the respect of the "diversity of their peers."

You know, we all want that. We all want that for our children. Those of us in the schools, on the front line—we know that. We want that for our children, and this government, since 2003, has taken enormous steps forward to provide that for our students. Today, Bill 242 is yet another positive step forward to support our young learners in our schools.

For children who attend, according to Dr. Pascal, his first recommendation is full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. So fast forward to the present. Here we are today, at second reading of Bill 242, talking about exactly that. One would hope that all parties would be onside, but we stand here this afternoon and we hear the opposition and the third party talk about all the glitches, looking for things to talk about. I'd like to take some time to actually address each of those and the facts that the people of Ontario deserve.

The Premier has recently announced this full-day learning program. I'd like to quote the Premier. He says:

"We're excited about this program. It's the first of its kind in North America. It's about ensuring that our children have every opportunity they need to prepare them for more advanced learning that takes place in grade 1.

"We know that this kind of a program will give our kids a better chance of not only completing high school, but going on to university, college or an apprenticeship program, landing a good job and enjoying a high quality of life...."

"When we open our doors to full-day learning for our four- and five-year-olds, it's not just a matter of improving educational opportunities for our kids and guaranteeing or at least assuring their greater success at school. It's also about building a stronger economy." It's about building a strong foundation for a strong economy and a globalized, knowledge-based economy.

I want to talk about how Bill 242 affects my riding directly. My riding of Kitchener-Conestoga is a wonderful compilation of a rural setting, of the three townships of Woolwich, Wellesley and Wilmot, and it's coupled and paired with the urban south Kitchener. How exciting is that, when we're looking at full-day learning for young learners who need additional support, who need to have the support of the publicly funded education system? In one of my townships, there's the small town of Floradale, an interesting compilation of Mennonites. The school has recently flourished. We have a larger attendance, and the community is thriving. The principal at Floradale Public School, Leslie McNabb, has said this about full-day learning:

"We are excited and pleased to be implementing full-day, every-day kindergarten in the first phase. The

majority of our school population are English-language learners, and they enter kindergarten with either no or minimal English-language literacy. Our population also does not have proficiency in their first language, because it is not written or read. We believe full-day, every-day kindergarten will allow our students greater success in acquiring their basic literacy skills and will allow them to be in a better literacy position when they enter grade 1.”

1720

I thank Principal McNabb for that, who is on the front lines and who can see the effect that this has and will have on our young learners.

Megan Conway is the director of Pathways to Education in Kitchener. Megan says of full-day learning: “Giving students the opportunity to be in school and learn more at an early age is a really important step towards guaranteeing greater success down the road. I’m enthused by this bill that works to give students the supports they need at an earlier age.”

I’m being cognizant of the time. I have more to share from local, on-the-ground constituents and what they have to say about full-day learning. I did want to share with you the perspective on Bill 242 of a director of education. Linda Fabi is the director of education with the Waterloo Region District School Board, and Linda says, “We welcome this program model as a positive addition to the existing outstanding kindergarten programs in our board and throughout” the province of “Ontario.” Our “families will benefit from the optional before and after school program and the kindergarten children will have fewer transitions in their day. This is an exciting opportunity for Waterloo region and our youngest students.” We thank director Fabi for those comments.

Here is the part where I look at some of the feedback that we’re getting from the opposition here today. This is where I give you the facts and dispel the myths.

The opposition has said that there are concerns about the growing boards and accommodating full-day learning classes at some schools that are bursting at the seams. In our first year we’re implementing early learning in schools that already have space to accommodate the additional classes. We realize there will be a need for new or renovated spaces, but most boards can accommodate phase two of the early learning program in the existing space without the need for immediate capital funding.

But on that note, since the fall of 2008 the ministry has put more money in for new schools and additions to allow local school boards to construct any additional space that may be needed.

This is one of my favourites. The opposition is saying, “Given the current economic environment, this is not the right time for implementing full-day learning.” I tell you, the time is now. There is a Chinese proverb that says, “Be not afraid of growing slowly; be afraid only of standing still.” I tell you, in education, with the official opposition and the third party, we stood still for years and years in our schools with our young learners. That is

behind us. The province of Ontario is moving forward with full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, giving four- and five-year-olds an earlier start on their learning. It improves their reading, writing and math skills. It provides a smoother transition to grade 1, and that has proven to show success in subsequent and further years. Establishing a strong foundation for early years is a powerful key to not only social success for our students but, of course, for the economic future of the province.

Another comment we’ve heard from the opposition: The third party has expressed concerns about the lack of direction the government has provided to teachers and ECEs in terms of collaboration in the classroom. Honestly, under Bill 242, the proposed new duty to co-operate is intended to provide recognition that the roles of teachers and ECEs would overlap in the early learning program, and where they’re working today, the two professionals would be expected to coordinate their activities, which is what we do in schools.

I think it’s important to iterate clearly that these are processes, these are clear steps that the government is taking. I think we have to dispel the myths that we hear from the opposition.

The obligation to co-operate with school staff already exists in the act for teachers, and, of course, we will expect that there will be that working relationship with the ECE workers as well.

We’ve implemented a number of measures to ensure the implementation is as smooth as possible. We’ve looked at this in detail. We’re having an implementation advisory team in place. What is an implementation advisory team? It’s comprised of stakeholders. For instance, it could be teachers, federations, boards of education, ECEs.

We also heard today the question of salaries for ECEs, so I want to get right to the facts on that as well. ECE salaries will be determined at the board level. The ministry looked at a variety of different hourly rates across the province, both inside as well as outside the education sector, and determined a competitive funding benchmark. The rate will be determined in order to ensure that we strike a balance, of course, between stabilizing the child care sector and making sure that school boards are still able to attract qualified ECEs.

Any concerns we may have heard from the opposition about providing extended-day services coming at the expense of daycare providers—we realize that four- and five-year-olds moving to the extended day in schools will have an impact on child care. This is why we’ve asked school boards to work with municipalities, we’ve asked school boards to work with Best Start networks in order to consider what the local impact will be on their child care in selecting their first sites, and they’ve done that. The government continues to work with municipalities to help stabilize child care services for children under four years of age during the implementation of early learning.

What else did we hear? Subsidies—we heard that from the third party just within the hour. Currently, the subsidy system and wait lists for child care are managed by—I

hope the member is listening; this is what he was asking—the 47 consolidated municipal service managers and the district social service administration boards in Ontario. The legislation would provide the government with the authority to enter into agreements regarding fee subsidy with municipalities and, of course, with other partners.

Selecting schools in high-priority areas is another issue that I think is worthy of discussion. School boards best understand the needs in their communities; there is no doubt about that. Boards were asked to look at and consider their local needs, the needs of their school communities and of their larger communities. At the same time, they were also looking at working with municipalities to discover what the needs were. They worked with their coterminous boards as well. At that point, the recommendations were reviewed.

An interesting point: More than half of phase one schools are in communities that demonstrate the highest need. So approximately 60% of phase one schools are in high need areas, as defined according to the low-income cut-off data. Again, it's all about balance. It's a balance between available space and consulting with boards and the criteria they need to look at in order to meet the needs of their particular communities.

We also heard the opposition trying to argue that staggering the introduction of early learning into schools is inequitable. We need to make sure that our progress is responsible; we need to make sure that our progress is affordable, obviously, given the current economic climate. We will continue to phase this in over time.

I'd be remiss if I didn't say we have come a long way. And we're not standing still, as we were under two previous governments. We have invested over \$5 billion to restore the schools since those days, and that investment is despite 106,000 fewer students.

I'm cognizant of time, Speaker.

The other thing we heard was a concern about investing in special ed funding. To the opposition, in fact we have increased special ed funding in our schools by over \$627 million since we took government in 2003. That is absolutely staggering and impressive. That's a 39% increase. The 2009-10 funding is projected to increase by \$49 million. I sure hope that they're listening because I think this sets the record straight.

I did want to share a quote with you from Sid Ryan and the perspective of CUPE. CUPE says that, "Full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds is the right kind of investment in Ontario's future and will succeed as long as all concerned parties are part of its implementation." Sid Ryan is president of CUPE, and he says, "This fundamental change in early learning is the right thing to do for our children and for our communities." He goes on to say, "I have to congratulate the provincial government for looking at the long term and moving forward with an investment in the future that will help stimulate the economy by creating new permanent jobs and tackling poverty."

I could quote to you for the next long time, but I won't put you through that, Speaker. But I did want to leave

you with a comment from me because here's what I have—from me; you did not see that coming. The comment that I have to say about Ontario's future as an educator and as a parent is that Ontario's future walks through the doors of our schools every day, and Bill 242 is essential.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to stand in support of Bill 242, full-day learning legislation.

As a former teacher, education is something that is very important to me. Since the Ontario government announced the full-day learning program, I have heard from many parents in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South, at my office and at events, who are very enthusiastic and very happy about the full-day learning program.

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of visiting St. Valentine Elementary School in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. St. Valentine is one of nearly 600 schools that will place about 35,000 children in full-day learning programs starting this September. By launching a full-day learning program, we are laying the foundation of a stronger workforce. If this legislation is passed, we are enabling our children to reach their full potential so that they can compete and win against the best in this world.

Another important part of this legislation is, we are empowering school boards to implement extended daycare programs before and after school. This will provide children a seamless day, and it will make learning easier for our children. It will make life easier for parents. They don't have to juggle between work, school and daycare. They can focus on their job. That will enhance productivity and, in turn, boost our economy.

This is a win-win situation. It is the right thing to do. It is the best thing to do. It is the best public policy. I urge all members of this House to support—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I listened to the comments of my colleague and neighbour to the north and I thank her for an excellent presentation on behalf of the government on Bill 242.

There's only one thing wrong with that bill—because no one can really state that the earlier we start our children in the educational system, the better it will be for their and our future. Unfortunately, by hastily throwing \$1.5 billion into the pot for this particular project, we've forgotten those children who have special needs. We've forgotten our special education programs that are woefully underfunded. There are lawsuits going on where people, parents, are trying to protect their children and are asking this government, "Please, please, help us, because otherwise our child will never grow up to be a working member of our society. Please help us," and our Premier has turned his back on these cries for help across this province. He may be remembered for that.

Another problem with the program as they set it up: It starts haves and have-nots once again. It's very diffi-

cult—this is a big province—but a lot of people are going to be disappointed because they will not be getting the same services in their community.

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

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am pleased to stand in support of Bill 242 today and comment on the wonderful speech by my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga.

One of the things that I think is actually the strength of our full-day learning program for four- and five-year-olds is that it is a massive undertaking—we admit that—but we are going to roll it in over several years; we're going to phase in the implementation, and we'll have time to think about it and get it right.

But when we went to the boards and asked which schools they were going to do first, we said, "First of all, you need to have space in the school." But we also said, "Secondly, boards, we'd like you to work together and we'd like to have you look at those schools that are perhaps located in neighbourhoods that have the greatest risk, where this program will have the greatest impact."

I know in my riding of Guelph I was absolutely thrilled to see the way the two boards worked together, the Upper Grand District School Board and the Wellington Catholic District School Board, because between the two of them—four programs in Upper Grand, two programs at Wellington Catholic—they in fact selected six neighbourhoods in Guelph, each of which has some areas of their catchment area where there are communities where there are really some challenges with people living in poverty and with a lot of high immigration rates—some real challenges. The board selected those schools where the program will have the greatest impact, because, contrary to what the member from Cambridge is saying, we know that this program will have a huge impact on giving kids a head start and making sure that kids with the greatest risk get the greatest impact from this program.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I wanted to comment on the member from Kitchener–Conestoga because I know she's a principal from a high school in that area on leave and she's very genuinely committed to doing the right thing.

Here's my point: I think there's a lot of agreement here, believe it or not. We all agree that this is a very well-intended policy enhancement for the people of Ontario, and I think we also agree that there's not a satisfactory amount of money to implement it adequately at this time. That's why they've chosen to phase it in over five and 10 years, so some parts of Ontario will get it and some won't.

The fairness issue is really where we're landing on this. In a time when they're underfunding class sizes, special education, transportation and busing—the funny thing is that we agree with it, but in all fairness, they're imputing motive on our part which is not well founded.

1740

If you think back to the Fraser Mustard report and you think back to the early learning provisions that we did under the Royal Commission on Learning, much of that was commissioned and begun under our government, and those who don't admit that know not of what they speak.

On this file, we are clearly on the record saying it's the right thing at the wrong time. The time would be to continue with the early learning centres and to do the proper parenting skills in the community and the resource centres for children and families in the communities. Give more options to the families. Give more options to the communities.

These school programs—lunch and after-school programs—are run, in many cases, by volunteers. Work with the operators today to provide more resources in an affordable environment, but keep moving forward with early learning provisions. That's my contribution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has up to two minutes to respond, but before she does, I remind members that the acoustics in this chamber are very good, so anything above low speaking is heard all the way across and then I have trouble hearing the member.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Lovely. Thank you, Speaker. My colleague is laughing at me for saying "Lovely," but it was lovely.

I wanted to thank the member from Mississauga–Brampton South, who talks about helping students to compete and win. Yes, that's what this is about. I want to address the members from Cambridge, Guelph and Durham: Thank you for your comments as well.

We are taking a measured, metered layout. In response to the member from Cambridge: The time, in fact, is now. We waited and walked the picket line under your government. I was a teacher at that time. We will never go back. The time to help our students is now, and we are doing that. I am proud of the McGuinty government for doing that and continuing to commit to education in the province of Ontario.

To the member from Guelph: I want to thank you for all of your commitment and dedication to education over the years. The rollout will occur over years so that, yes, we will have the time to think about it and to get it right. Thank you for all of your hard work. Thank you to the member for all of her hard work on Bill 242, and thank you on behalf of all of the students of Ontario.

I think we need to go back for one more comment that we heard from the opposition about special ed funding. I did mention it in my 20-minute discussion, but I'll go back to it. We have increased special ed funding by over \$627 million since 2003—a 39% increase in special ed funding. Again, to the member, in 2009-10, funding is projected to increase by \$49 million to a provincial total of over \$2.25 billion.

Again, I'd just say that Ontario's future walks through the doors of our schools every day. Schools are where the kids are. That's where we are investing to make a difference in this province.

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

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm really pleased to speak today on Bill 242, which is the bill that amends the Education Act to provide for the operation of junior kindergarten and kindergarten on a full-day basis; the operation of extended day programs outside the hours of junior kindergarten and kindergarten; and also the appointment of early childhood educators to positions in junior kindergarten and kindergarten and in these extended day programs.

In the summer of 2009, Dr. Charles Pascal proudly delivered his report and recommendations that he had been working on for a couple of years. I wonder what Dr. Pascal is thinking right now and how disappointed he must be at how badly botched this program has turned out to be.

What can the McGuinty Liberal government be thinking by admitting that this program is going to cost, when it's full-blown out, \$1.5 billion, when they clearly have no money and no plan today? Where is this money coming from? Can we expect this number to grow, since no funding has been announced about the refurbishment of classrooms, the physical space needs to accommodate these new programs? This piecemeal approach to how we deliver important programs, programs that are here for the long term that are going to affect the children in our province in how they learn and move forward and affect the people who teach them—and we have no real plan. All we have is an announcement.

So here is the pattern: Once again, we have a great idea. Who can argue with the idea that's been presented? Who can argue with Dr. Pascal? The argument is, there is no real plan. How do you execute this? The merit in this and the vulnerability of the success in this is that the intentions are good but the execution is non-existent. There is no plan.

Our party believes that this government cannot afford \$1.5 billion in a new program today. This government is faced with an almost \$25-billion, record-breaking deficit. It has been months since the McGuinty Liberals revealed that they had run the province into this \$25-billion deficit. To date, we have heard absolutely no plan—not one, single meaningful restraint measure—in order to deal with this record-breaking deficit. Without a plan to reduce it, how can we now expect to be introducing spending of this magnitude on a program that isn't even recognizable from the recommendations that Dr. Pascal made? Without a plan to reduce the deficit, we shouldn't be making these kinds of announcements.

Where is the money coming from? Does anybody on the government side of the House know? Where is this money coming from? Ontarians are interested to know about this. They want an affordable approach to this plan because their kids are going to be on the front line.

This announcement is coming at a time when special education funding is insufficient to respond to the most vulnerable students in our system. The transportation file is also significantly underfunded. The funding formulas

for special education and the transportation file need to be reviewed immediately, before we start injecting new programs that cost more.

Do you know what happens? School boards are left robbing Peter to pay Paul. They will be left to do even more complicated juggling acts in their budgets, and it leaves the system vulnerable. There is no detail of implementation, simply that a few schools, some winners—and there are a lot more losers—are going to have the program this September. Once again, this government is moving forward on an initiative as important as this, with a magnitude of financial burden that this is going to bring, without a plan.

These programs are about photo ops, the Premier's wannabe legacy as the education Premier, the green Premier—hence his recently signed deal worth millions of dollars with Samsung, which means exorbitant energy prices for all Ontarians. It seems that this Premier's legacy is going to be hard on the wallets of all Ontarians: It's going to be increased taxes, increased user fees, increased energy costs, on top of the HST and what other surprises we may find in the spring budget.

The McGuinty Liberals have a pattern of throwing money at an initiative, enjoying that photo op, and leaving anyone but themselves to sort out the details, whether it's the unfortunate LHINs in the health care system—and in this case, it's going to be the school boards. It's always left to somebody else to clean up the mess and make the difficult decision.

Full-day JK and SK is a complex issue. There are significant challenges around this implementation, and the cost is huge. This is a program that some school board trustees are calling “one of the most ill-conceived and badly thought-through programs that the province has ever announced.” This is coming from someone who's going to have to deal with the mess after it has been implemented. This program creates unequal access, since some parents will have access to the program—and they'll have it this year in September 2010—while others are just going to have to continue to pay children's day-care costs for an indefinite period of time.

1750

Ontarians are tired of Mr. McGuinty's winner and loser approach. Just like the HST, where seniors and young families are compromised in order get a \$3-billion tax grab, some parents are going to have to wait for access for who knows how long, and they will have to wait while their neighbours' kids are receiving that same program. The government has not indicated which schools will start the program in 2011, 2012, 2013 and beyond. All we know is that the program is starting in September 2010. The government will be phasing in all-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds. In the first year, only 580 schools will offer the program. There's a website showing a list of these schools, and already people in my community are saying “How come not me?” And “When will I get it? Why do I have to wait? How do I plan for my family?”

Our education critic mentioned that there are going to be children living in communities side by side where one

may go to the separate school and another one to the public school. One parent will have to continue to pay for their child care, but the other one will not. This is creating some concerns in the communities across this province, and certainly I have received some calls.

Parents have also contacted our education critic, indicating that they have concerns about not knowing when their child will qualify for this program and how they feel that there is some unfairness in the way the program is being rolled out. How do they plan for their family? How do they do that in-family planning for these most important issues to know where and when their child will be looked after?

There's a broken promise here, another broken promise. This government promised to cap class sizes at 20 students per class. By the Premier's own admission, this will now increase to 26 students for our youngest learners. What explanation does Mr. McGuinty have for this? How are the McGuinty Liberals going to keep their promises to keep class sizes capped at 20 students per class when this will increase class sizes to 26 students? That's a difference of six students. There's no magic here; do the math.

Is it fair that now school boards will be saddled with the decisions of who's going to be in full-day kindergarten and who isn't? You know what they've had to do? They've had to indicate to our constituents that this may be by a lottery system. What a shoddy way to deal with education for our children here in Ontario—a lottery system. Shame.

There are some things that are not optional. I don't know whether Ontarians understand that this program leaves little choice for parents who want only a half-day program for their child when they begin school, so let me explain this. If parents live in the catchment area of full-day kindergarten, they will not have a choice to send their child to a half-day program because the school now offers only the full-day program. Now we have taken choice away from parents. That isn't even democratic.

How are the McGuinty Liberals going to explain to families that won't have access to the programs why they were left out? The promise was made to all families that there will be full-day junior and senior kindergarten, and now families have found that there are winners and losers. Some have been picked; some have not. This is not acceptable to Ontario families. You will find that out once it's implemented and school begins in September 2010; the uprising will occur.

How are the McGuinty Liberals going to tackle what children in full-day kindergarten classes are learning in comparison to what children in half-day kindergarten classes are learning? How are you going to test that? What are the comparables going to be? How flexible are you going to be in that?

Again, a great idea: Support the kids; give them every advantage of early learning. Badly executed, Mr. Speaker. Very badly executed.

Has the Premier reconciled how this will affect the organizations that deliver lunchtime and after-school programs? These organizations have been left in the lurch. Nobody talked to them about what happens after full-day junior and senior kindergarten is implemented. When is that process going to take place? These were partners in our schools, partnered with the school boards to make sure that children who remained in school for the full day had the care they needed by responsible people. No one has talked to them; again, a pattern in this government. Nobody speaks to people who are delivering services. Great ideas come forward, photo ops happen, but that's it.

As I said in the beginning, Mr. Speaker, good intentions, poor execution.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm going to have to refer to my clock.

It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock, February 25.

The House adjourned at 1757.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Leeds–Grenville	
Vacant	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craitor
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Eric Hoskins, Pat Hoy
Norm Miller, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziatti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, Reza Moridi
David Oraziatti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Yasir Naqvi, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Michael Prue
Khalil Ramal
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
France Gélinas, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craitor, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Sophia Aggelonitis, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
 DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Smart meters
 Mrs. Joyce Savoline 9503

Energy contracts
 Mr. Peter Tabuns 9504

John Babcock
 Mr. David Zimmer 9504

Municipal conferences
 Mr. Ted Arnott 9504

Children's aid societies
 Mr. Khalil Ramal 9505

Local Democracy Week
 Mr. John O'Toole 9505

Disaster relief
 Mr. Bas Balkissoon 9505

First aid training
 Mr. Yasir Naqvi 9505

Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir
 Mrs. Maria Van Bommel 9506

Tabling of sessional papers
 The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters) 9506

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
 RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts
 Mr. Norman W. Sterling 9506
 Debate adjourned 9506

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills
 Mr. Michael Prue 9506
 Report adopted 9507

Standing Committee on Public Accounts
 Mr. Norman W. Sterling 9507
 Debate adjourned 9507

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills
 Mr. Michael Prue 9507
 Report adopted 9507

Taxation
 Mrs. Joyce Savoline 9507

Taxation
 Mrs. Joyce Savoline 9507

Climate change
 Mr. Phil McNeely 9508

Taxation
 Mr. John O'Toole 9508

Taxation
 Mr. Robert Bailey 9508

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Full Day Early Learning Statute Law Amendment Act, 2010, Bill 242, Mrs. Dombrowsky / Loi de 2010 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne l'apprentissage des jeunes enfants à temps plein, projet de loi 242, Mme Dombrowsky
 Mr. John O'Toole 9509
 Mr. Rosario Marchese 9512
 Mr. Rick Johnson 9512
 Mr. Bill Mauro 9512
 Mr. Dave Levac 9513
 Mr. John O'Toole 9513
 Mr. Rosario Marchese 9513
 Mr. Wayne Arthurs 9521
 Mr. John O'Toole 9521
 Mr. Gilles Bisson 9522
 Mr. Dave Levac 9522
 Mr. Rosario Marchese 9522
 Ms. Leeanna Pendergast 9523
 Mrs. Amrit Mangat 9525
 Mr. Gerry Martiniuk 9525
 Mrs. Liz Sandals 9526
 Mr. John O'Toole 9526
 Ms. Leeanna Pendergast 9526
 Mrs. Joyce Savoline 9527
 Second reading debate deemed adjourned 9528

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 24 February 2010 / Mercredi 24 février 2010

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, Bill 235, Mr. Duguid / Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie, projet de loi 235, M. Duguid

Mr. Dave Levac.....	9483
Mr. John O'Toole.....	9483
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	9484
Mr. Phil McNeely.....	9484
Hon. John Wilkinson.....	9484
Mr. Dave Levac.....	9485
Mr. John O'Toole.....	9485
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	9488
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	9488
Mr. Ted Arnott.....	9488
Mr. Rick Johnson.....	9489
Mr. John O'Toole.....	9489
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	9489
Mr. Dave Levac.....	9492
Mr. John O'Toole.....	9492
Mr. Khalil Ramal.....	9492
Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde.....	9492
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	9493
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	9493

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel.....	9493
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn.....	9493
Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	9493
Mr. Frank Klees.....	9493
Mr. Glen R. Murray.....	9493
Mr. Robert Bailey.....	9493
Mr. John O'Toole.....	9493
Mr. Tony Ruprecht.....	9493
The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters).....	9493

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Manufacturing jobs

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	9494
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	9494

Long-term care

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	9494
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	9494

Taxation

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9495
Hon. Mr. Duncan.....	9495

International trade

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9496
Hon. Sandra Pupatello.....	9496

Environmental protection

Mr. Toby Barrett.....	9497
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	9497

Government contracts

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	9497
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	9497

Workplace safety

Mr. Glen R. Murray.....	9498
Hon. Peter Fonseca.....	9498

Aboriginal land dispute

Mr. Ted Chudleigh.....	9498
Hon. Christopher Bentley.....	9498

Public transit

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	9499
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	9499

Tourism

Mr. Rick Johnson.....	9499
Hon. Michael Chan.....	9499

Recreational vehicles

Mr. Frank Klees.....	9500
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	9500

Northern economy

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9500
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	9500

Children and youth

Mr. Yasir Naqvi.....	9501
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	9501

Children's mental health services

Mr. Peter Shurman.....	9501
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	9502

Children's mental health services

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	9502
Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....	9502

Health care

Mr. Jeff Leal.....	9503
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	9503

Mining industry

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	9503
Hon. Dwight Duncan.....	9503

Continued on inside back cover